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Sierra Life

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HIGH SIERRA

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Sequoia National Park

Missing and Presumed Dead
A 30-year mystery remains unsolved

WALTER A. "PETE" STARR

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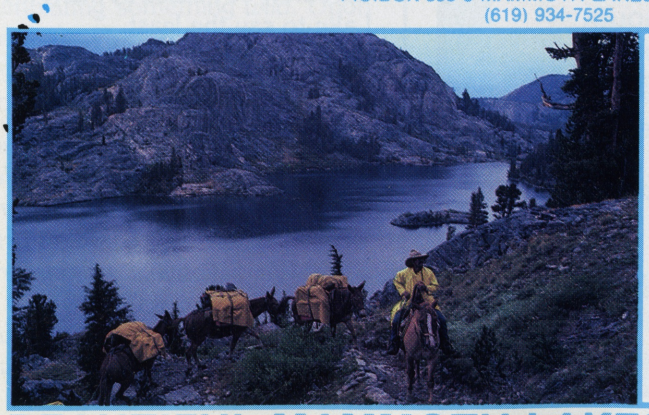

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LETTERS

Dear Editor:

Thank you for publishing the article on the California mountain lion in your March/April 1988 issue. It comes as no surprise that, on April 8, the Fish and Game Commission approved a trophy hunting season, allowing for the senseless slaughter of 190 lions. It's important that the public is made aware of the danger, once again facing these magificent creatures.

Just because there is a kill limit of one cat per permit, that's not going to stop the "headhunters" from shooting more. And what about those who are "unfortunate" enough not to secure a permit? Do you think they're going to sit quietly and wait until next year? I don't.

The bottom line is that if a trophy hunt takes place this year, the number of lions allowed to be blasted next year will increase, and the number of kills permitted will continue to increase, as the already questionable lion population decreases.

If people care about the ill-fated future of one of their last, beautiful natural resources, they will begin, or continue to publicly show their outrage at the approval of the hunt.

D. Eisman,
San Diego, CA

Dear Editor:

On January 11, 1988, we lost an important figure in the life of the Sierra; David Gaines of the Mono Lake Committee was killed in a car accident.

How about a "Memorial Tribute" in the next issue of *Sierra Life* ? David will surely be missed by many ... Mono Lake to say the least.

Keith Liker
San Diego, CA

ED: Our July/August 1988 issue will profile David and his invaluable contributions to our environment. This issue will also contain Part II of An Ill Wind Blowing. The lessons we have learned from Owens Dry Lake should prevent us from further distruction of Mono Lake ... But has the lesson been learned?

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Spring, which has already sprung in the flatlands, is making its way with a flourish up our favorite mountains. It's been a good two months since I've lost my way in the woods or fallen down a mountain, so its obviously time to plan a new chapter in my Book of Mishaps.

Before I become lost in contemplation of pending adventures, though, I want to welcome two new columns and their authors to *Sierra Life* .

Steve Boga, who writes those great profiles on high-risk adventurers, has joined our staff as an editor and author of the new column *Sierra Footprints* (See page 54). Steve will keep us updated on people and events in the High Sierra.

And then there's William D. Dooley. You may recall him as the "large spinner" who "fished the loophole" in our March/April fish tales feature. Mr. Dooley has a thousand tales of incredible experiences in the Sierra -- all of which he claims are true. You'll read about the adventures of a self-proclaimed "low tech" camper in his new column, *Trail Trash* (See page 70). (If he isn't a bit nicer to the publisher in his future columns, you may find his column moved a few pages *farther back* in subsequent issues.)

Now for that adventure ... I was contemplating something *wild*. Upon further reflection, I think I'll just follow spring right up the mountain and watch the wildflowers bloom.

Sandie Pramann
Publisher

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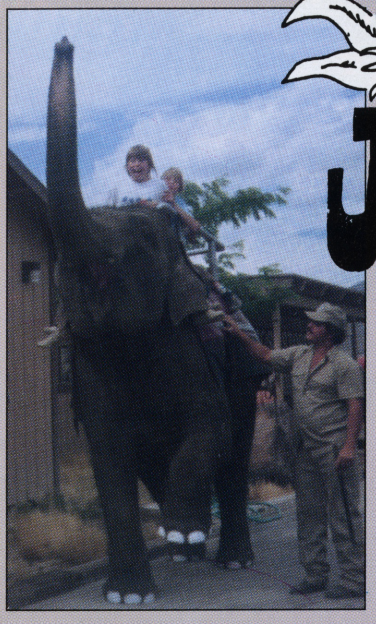

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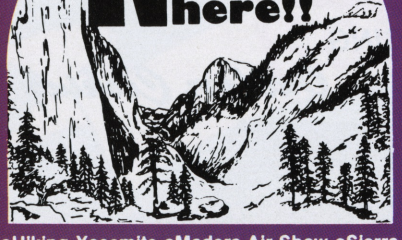

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On the cover: Wildflowers carpet the view to Clyde Peak in early spring. Photo by Brenda Stone.

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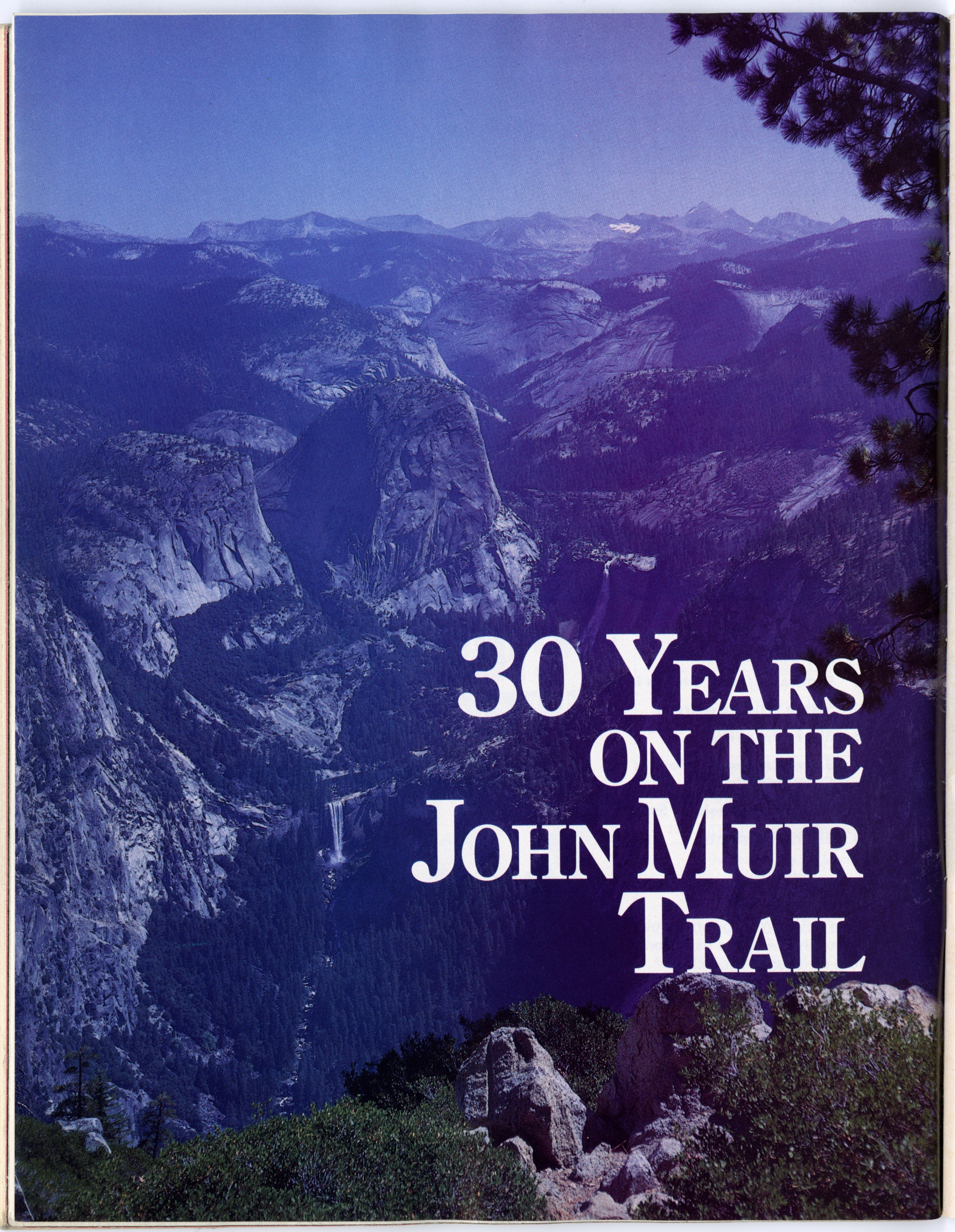

30 YEARS
ON THE
JOHN MUIR
TRAIL

"This high country life sort of gets in your blood and once it does you're not good for much." Glenn Burns, who packed people and supplies into the High Sierra for half a century.

Text by Steve Boga
Photos by William J. Boga

1958: We have been studying this weird guy John Muir in school—he used to hike around in the high mountains with only a blanket and a few biscuits—and today I got to see the trail that's named after him. Mom, Dad and I are camping in Yosemite Valley, where Muir hung out a lot of the time. This morning Dad took me to Happy Isles, to the start (they call it the "trail head") of the John Muir Trail. We stood there for what seemed like a long time just staring at the trail sign, a big old iron thing with stenciled names and numbers that looked like it might have been around when that guy Muir was. It listed nice-sounding places like Sunrise and Palisade Lakes, and incredible distances! "Mt. Whitney: 212 miles." I can't imagine walking that far.

A couple of hikers with green backpacks and fishing gear strapped to the outside came walking up from the parking lot. They stopped for just a second to read the sign, then gave each other kind of strained smiles and headed up the trail with real determination. I watched them a long time after they'd gone. I couldn't help wondering, "Where are they going?. . . How long will they be gone?"

When I looked at my father's face I could tell he was thinking the same thing. Then he took my hand—which he never does—and led me to the other side of the sign. "There, you're on the John Muir Trail," he said. "We're at the lowest point on the whole trail—four thousand and thirty-four feet above sea level. . ." That made me think: At home Dad never seems to have the time to teach me things, but in the mountains he's different. He's always telling me about geography and geology and something called ecology.

". . .While it's true that many Sierra lakes were once meadows, that doesn't mean that every Sierra lake will become a meadow—unless man keeps tampering with the natural processes. . ."

A few minutes later, while we were sitting on a rock eating some dried fruit and stale sandwiches, and listening to the friendly roar of the Merced River, Dad said, "You know, I've always wanted to hike the whole trail, all 212 miles of it. . ." It wasn't so much what he was saying that got to me—I've always thought of him as sort of an athlete—it was how he was saying it. Full of regret, like he'd missed something really important. It made me feel kind of sad. And then eating that stale peanut butter and jelly sandwich that he'd made for us, well, that made me feel even sadder. ". . .I don't suppose I'll ever do it now. . . you have to put in food caches along the way. . . and you need a buddy to hike with. . ." For a second I thought I might cry. At that moment I figured I probably liked him better than I ever had. I looked up at him and smiled and he smiled back, and I could tell he was wondering if I could ever be that buddy. He looked so darn hopeful that I wanted to hug him and tell him, "Oh sure you will, Dad, someday we'll do it as a team."

But we just aren't that way together.

The next day we all hiked the beginning of the John Muir Trail, to the top of Vernal Falls. Mom said it was the most beautiful hike she'd ever taken. The guide book that she keeps in her knapsack calls it "a steep climb through a mist-enshrouded granite-walled amphitheater." That sounds about right to me.

It was a steep climb all right, but I was so excited that I kept hiking ahead, pretending I was John Muir. Then I'd run back down and hike with Mom and Dad for awhile, before blasting ahead to see how many more tourists I could pass (final count: 234). Mom hikes slow but does okay for her age, which must be right up there. Dad goes slow to stay with her and to take pictures.

At the top we sat on a rock and had lunch. The sun was reflecting brightly off the granite, so I put on my dark glasses, feeling real cool. "Dad," I said, "did John Muir wear dark glasses?"

"Well now, he must have because he was always hiking around on snow fields and glaciers where you can get snow blindness if you don't protect your eyes."

It was hot enough for me to take off my shirt. The sun seemed awfully strong, like it was digging little craters into my back. I've noticed a change in my senses ever since we got to the mountains. For one thing, the sky looks a lot bluer than ever before; for another, the pine and spruce trees smell sweeter, and the sounds—the buzzing of insects, the chirping of birds and squirrels, the wind moving through the leaves—they seem . . . sweeter too. My mother says I might be getting an early jump on puberty.

When we wanted to talk we had to shout above the roar of Vernal falls, which sounded like thunder that

The Evolution of a Trail

by Steve Boga

It's extraordinary how little was known of the High Sierra until just recently. Before the 1820's, it was terra incognita to the white man; Indians passed through it—from east to west—only when they needed to get to the other side to trade with other tribes. As a result, it was just about the last part of California to be explored and mapped.

The first recorded white men in the southern Sierra Nevada were American trappers who came in search of beaver in 1827. In 1833, Joe Walker led 60 trappers through northern Yosemite (although the consensus among contemporary historians is that his party did not set eyes upon Yosemite Valley). The immigrants coming overland to California in the early 1840's wisely chose to cross north or south of the High Sierra—(all, that is, except for the ill-fated Donner Party). In 1844-45, John Fremont, explorer extraordinaire, encircled the southern mountains but never seriously explored the region. After the discovery of gold in 1848, prospectors swarmed all over the foothills of the northern Sierra but totally ignored the southern part.

The first proper reconnaisance of the southern Sierra Nevada began in the spring of 1864 when Professor Josiah D. Whitney, in charge of the California Geological Survey, sent a field party to explore the high mountains and to discover the sources of the Kings, Kaweah and Kern Rivers.

In 1869 a penniless 31-year-old John Muir, anxious to see the High Sierra, hired on as a sheepherder. Working with an assistant and several dogs, he took 2,000 sheep into the high mountains starting from the south side of the Tuolumne River near French Bar. His job was to gradually move the animals higher as the snow melted, stopping at the best meadows so they could graze.

Continued on page 62

wouldn't quit. Dad and I spent most of our time looking up the trail toward Nevada Falls, Muir Pass, Mt. Whitney, wondering what it was like up there, what adventures awaited anyone going all the way to Whitney.

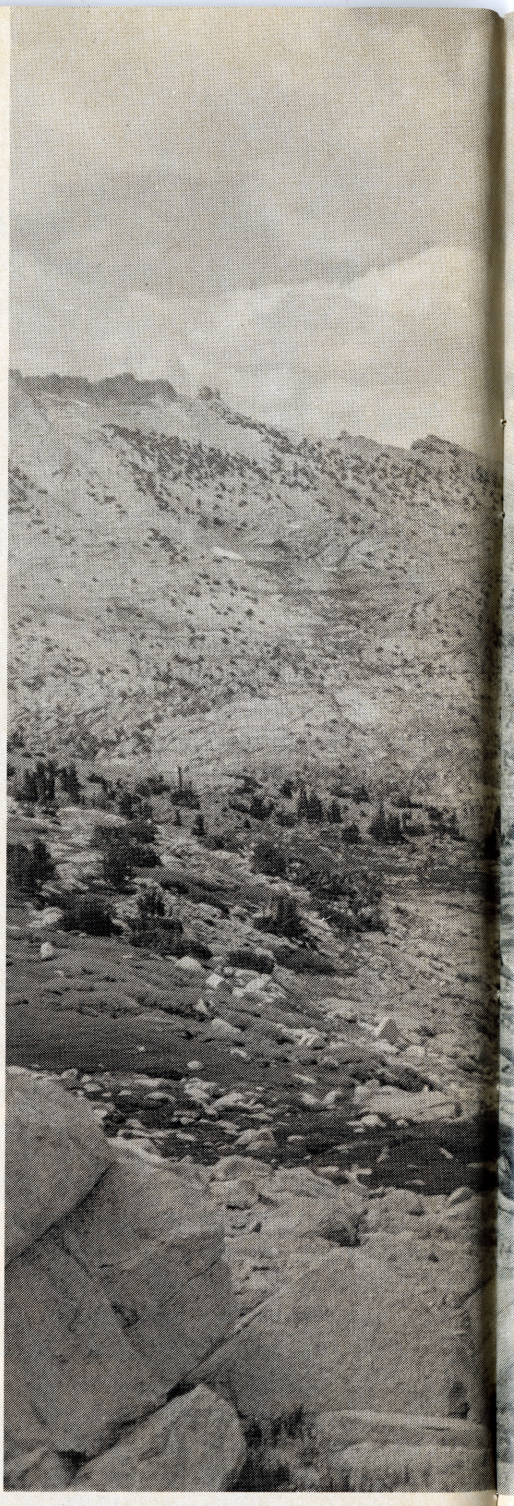
It's like Dad and I share a secret now. . .

1960: Dad and I are halfway through a two-week backpacking trip in Yosemite, a lot of it on the John Muir Trail. We are carrying backpacks that are way too heavy (Dad brought a hatchet, a heavy camera, and together we brought enough food to make John Muir throw up). And after a week alone, personal relations between Dad and I are sometimes about as chilly as the lakes we camp by. Still and all, it has been an unforgettable trip and great in many ways. I have learned about white water, black bears, mosquitoes, campfires, boots, pitching tents, fishing, altitude, storms, rock formations, sleeping bags, crossing streams, glaciers, and the Belding ground squirrel. Though Dad has never concerned himself much with my urban survival skills, he takes an active interest in my wilderness education.

One of my favorite parts of the trip has been Little Yosemite Valley, where an emerald-green Merced River flows lazily beneath overhanging trees and tall bushes. It's as though it's storing up energy for its bruising fall onto the rocks below.

My skinny little body—tougher, tanner than in the city—is covered with mosquito bites and scabs from where I've scratched. Hiking in the shadows of a late afternoon forest, I have learned, is a sure-fire way to attract the mountain mosquito (see the article on mosquitoes in this issue), and attract them I do. Even insect repellent doesn't help much. Dad says it's because they have a licking crew and a biting crew. Against his advice, I scratch until I bleed. Always the statistician, I've kept a running tally of the insects I've killed (presently 1,214).

We were lounging around our campsite last evening, a cozy little spot beneath gnarled pine trees on a tributary of the Merced River. The



fire was crackling and a few feet away the stream was tinkling, when suddenly a deer with stubby velvet antlers appeared on the edge of camp. "Sssh," said my father, slowly reaching for his camera. "Can we feed him?" I asked, forgetting myself. "No!" my father said in a loud whisper. The deer looked up without alarm, then went back to chewing on a bush.

After a few minutes of dainty browsing mixed with curious, sad-eyed glances at us, the deer slowly

moved out of camp, across the stream and out of sight. "Sorry I yelled at you," Dad said. "I just get so mad when it comes to feeding deer. How many times I've seen idiot tourists in the Valley trying to feed french fries to the deer. All to get a photograph. It's so selfish. Do you know that in the recorded history of Yosemite, nobody has ever been killed by a bear. But people have been killed by deer."

"Really? How?" I couldn't imagine one of those gentle Bambi-like creatures murdering someone.

"Just like I was saying: Tourists let their kids feed a deer, the deer spooks, throws his head, the antlers catch the kid, tears his face off."

Dad was playing rough. He had purposely used a vivid image in order to teach me a lesson, and he had succeeded.

He changed the subject. He said that early the next morning we were hiking to a lake which was above 10,000 feet and supposed to have Golden Trout. That, he implied, was a big deal. He told me that the 13-inch trout mounted on our den wall back home, the one I had repeatedly made fun of because it was so much smaller than the steelhead on the other wall, was in fact a golden trout. ". . . shiny olive-green on the top of its head and back. . . a belly that glistens with a midline strip of crimson. . ." He was talking about a fish, but his tone was solemn, like something you'd hear at a wedding, or a funeral. This particular fish, he said, is not only gorgeous, it's exotic and

Understanding Altitude Sickness

by Steve Boga

When you stand at sea level, the air you breathe is compressed by the earth's gravitational field. There is a profusion of oxygen molecules, and your body is well-supplied with the essential fuel it needs to produce energy.

As you gain altitude, the relative amount of oxygen in the atmosphere remains at a constant 21% up to an altitude of 350,000 feet, but the total number of molecules of oxygen decreases. The body, as it begins to starve for oxygen, is beset with all sorts of chemical imbalances, most of which move water around to places in the body it's not supposed to go, like the brain and the lungs. Symptoms of altitude disorder include headache, insomnia, loss of appetite, lethargy, vomiting, rapid heart action, breathing disturbances and loss of coordination. Generally, they begin to manifest themselves at 9,000 feet (which is close to the mean elevation of the John Muir Trail). Two-thirds of the people who summit 14,410-foot Mt. Ranier suffer some symptoms.

As the body adapts to altitude, the symptoms subside, usually within two or three days. In extreme cases, however, pulmonary or cerebral edema (accumulation of excess fluid in the lungs or brain) can occur. Both are life threatening if the victim is not immediately moved to a lower altitude.

The world's foremost authority on high-altitude sickness is an emergency physician named Peter Hackett, who lives in Anchorage and works two months a year on Mt. McKinley. Hackett, who is also a climber (he has summitted Mt. Everest), sets up a portable lab every spring at 14,000′ on McKinley and lives there for the May-June climbing

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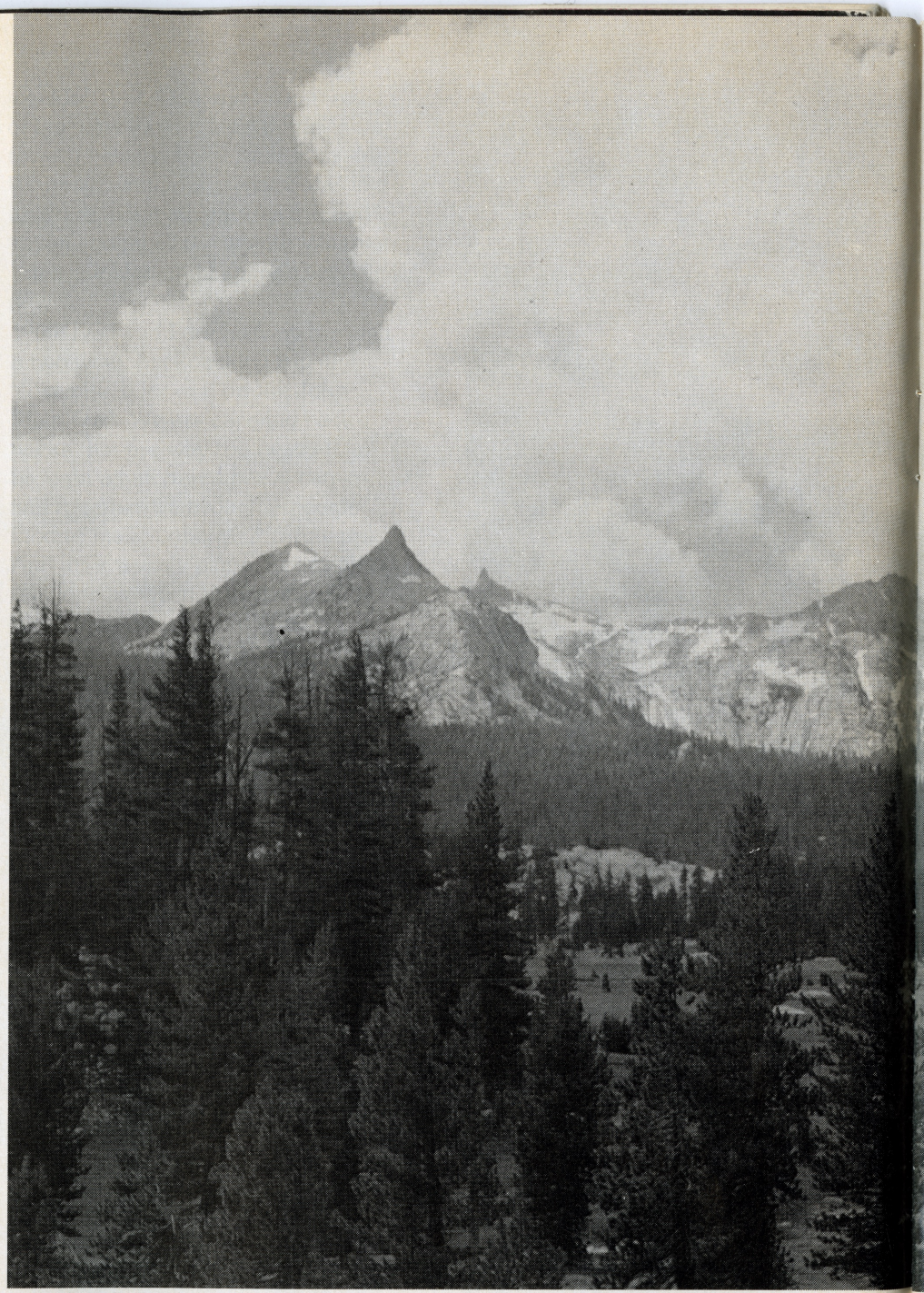


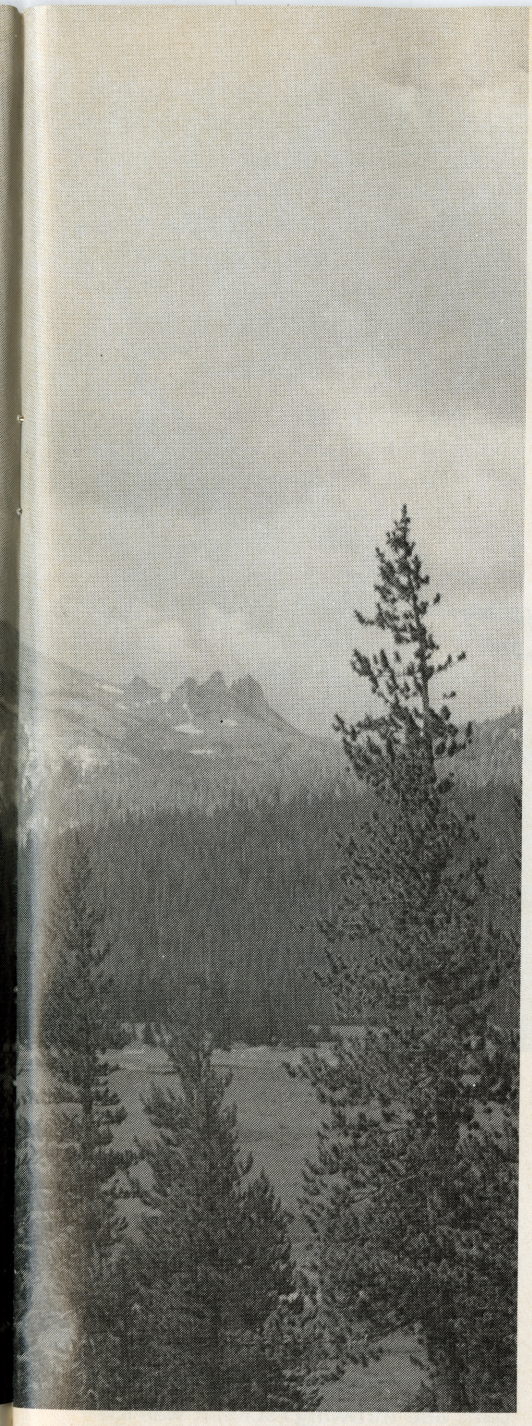
rare. It thrives only above 9,000 feet and never gets bigger than 18 inches. It's a great fighter, a must for the truly dedicated Sierra fisherman. . .

I caught his mood. To my goal of one day hiking the John Muir Trail, I added: "Catch Golden Trout."

1968: As a kid, I twisted the art of fishing—like so many other things in my life—into a fiercely competitive event. I was angry when my father caught more fish than I did, which was always. "I hate this sport," I'd say, sitting on the river bank with a lapful of snarled line. "It's a character builder," my father would say, pulling out another fish.

Still, it wasn't always my fault. I learned early that fishing in the John Muir Trail country suffered by comparison with places like Alaska, Wyoming, New Zealand. The High Sierra, as remote as it seems after 50 weeks in the city, has too high a people-to-fish ratio. My own experience has certainly validated that. In my young life, I have struck out in more lakes than most people have ever fished. The Sierra trout I've caught—usually Brook or Rainbow have typically been small and few.

Until now, that is. After paying my dues for 10 years, I've finally progressed to the point that here at Rae



Lakes the fish are small and many.

A college friend named Danny and I have hiked over Glen Pass and down to Rae Lakes. Danny has long raved about the fishing in the Rae Lakes, always with this galling addendum: "Steve, even you could catch fish there. . ." So this year I came with him—just to prove him wrong. I found it hard to believe the Rae Lakes would be much different than Dog Lake, Granite Lake, Lake Elizabeth, Cathedral Lake, Wanda Lake. . .

I set up my rod and reel with a sense of impending doom. As I tied my Super Duper on, I had a vision of

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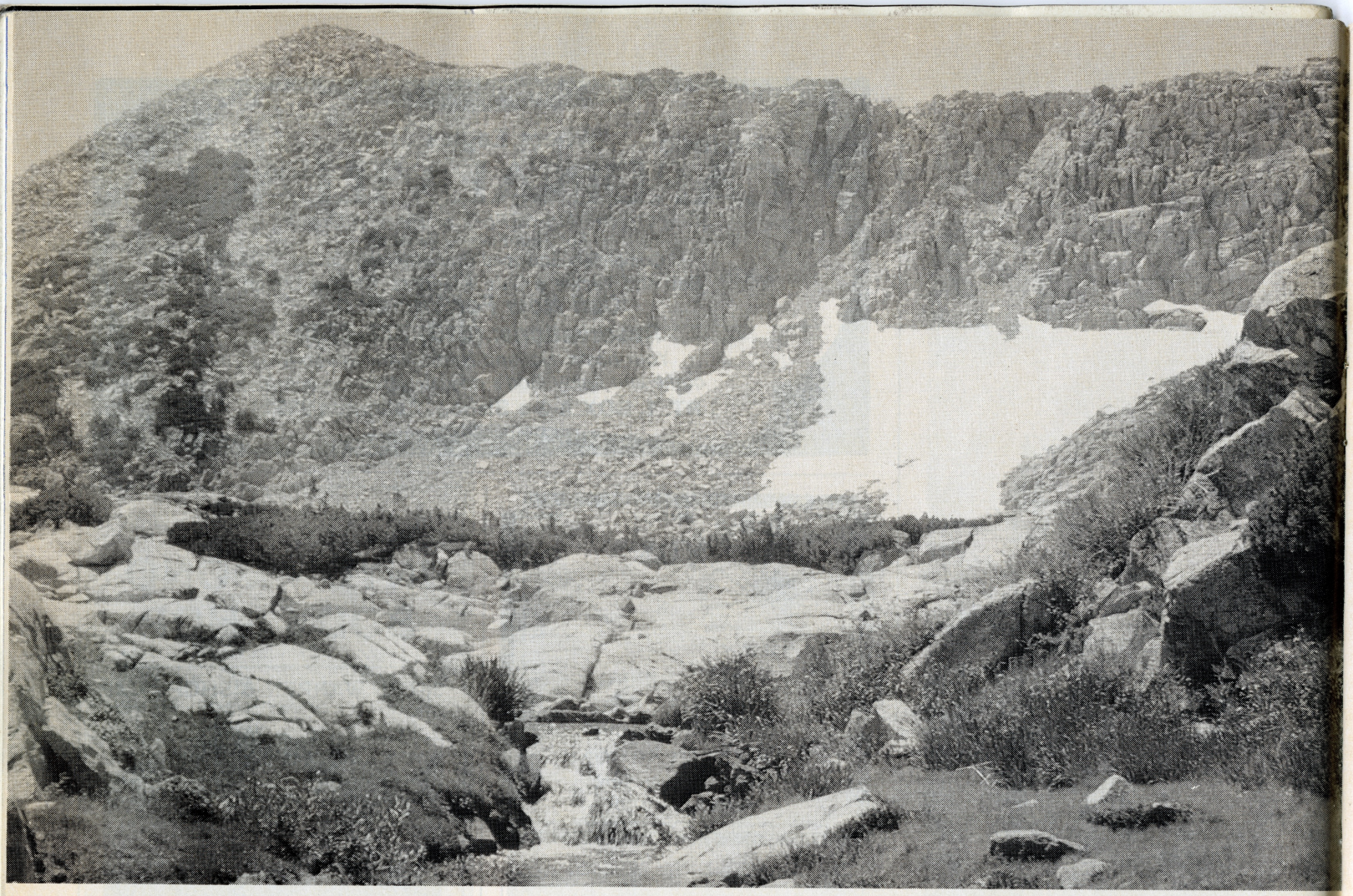

my first cast in which the lure would sail out into the middle of the lake in a perfect parabola, followed by a ball of fishing line that resembled a small storm cloud. I saw myself pulling in tree limbs, old tires. . . But lo, on the first cast, I hooked a fish. I fully expected it to spit the lure back in my face and escape to wherever fish escape to, but after a fierce 20 or 30 second battle, I landed the beast. It was a brook trout, not big—8 inches or so—but big enough to keep and fry up with some of the onion we brought. On the second cast, I got a solid strike, but lost the battle. On the third cast, I landed the twin brother of the first one. On the fourth, two brookies did battle for the rights to my lure, and for a time I thought I might become the first to hook two fish simultaneously on the same lure. After 10 casts, I had seven keepable brook trout. On the other side of the lake, Danny had five. "I think I'm going to like this place," I called to him, breaking a sweet, deep silence.

I feel as though I've waited my whole backpacking life to enjoy fishing like this—but now I'm not enjoying it. The thrill lasted a total of about two hours. I now understand the old saying ". . .as easy as shooting fish in a barrel." We haven't been using a gun, but we might just as well have for all the sport involved. These voracious little trout will attack an unbaited hook, which I find a tad perverse. Well, I can't allow these fish to make a fool of me; we're moving down to Bullfrog Lake, where the fishing isn't supposed to be nearly as good. Maybe then I'll be happy.

1973: After 15 seasons in John Muir Trail country, I finally lost a round to the bears. On my first Sierra backpacking trip, my father had taught me the how's and why's of hanging food out of the reach of bears, so I thought I was safe. "A super animal," he used to say. "Super fast, super strong, and super hungry."

Over the years, I had had a few run-ins with the furry guardians of the Sierra, but had always managed to drive them away, usually by banging loudly on pots or throwing rocks.

Last night, camped with Jeff and my girlfriend Donna near Mather Pass, we were awakened by the sleep-piercing sound of bear claws on tree bark. We clambored out of our sleeping bags, naked, and began running toward the source of the racket, screaming, banging pots and pans and throwing rocks. It was to no avail, however, as in the slender shafts of moonlight we could see a large mother bear and her cub retreating to the woods, our two stuff sacks of food hanging from their mouths.

"She must've sent the cub out on the limb to break the rope," I said, broken-hearted.

"Once they get their claws on that food," Jeff said as we stumbled back to camp, "it'd take nuclear weapons to get it away from them."

In the morning, we followed a trail of raisins and almonds, and found a discarded dinner here, a soup mix there. (That, along with some clutch

fishing allowed us to stay out for another three days.) We also found a plethora of bear scat containing telltale signs of red tinfoil. "A super stomach too," I said.

The following night, camped near Evolution Valley, we were visited by a smaller, but equally intrusive denizen of the High Sierra. In the middle of the night, I was awakened by a sound I couldn't identify. Sitting up in my bag, I reached for a flashlight and shined it around camp. Our food was still hanging from a nearby tree. . . the camp seemed in order. . . then I saw it: about ten yards from me, the unmistakable silhouette of a porcupine waddling blithely away; when the beam from my flashlight spotlighted him, he stopped, turned, gave me a look of total disdain, then turned back and disappeared into the night. The next morning I discovered that he had devoured a sizeable chunk of my Ensolite sleeping pad—while I slept on it!

"That's not all," Jeff said. "It also ate part of the tongue of my boot."

"This is very disillusioning," I said. "Here we are in nature's showcase, and the animals are into synthetics."

1978: Sure, I've said it before, but this time I really have discovered the perfect Sierra fishing spot. To be absolutely precise, my partner Jeff did the actual discovering. We had been out a week, hiking in Yosemite, on and around the John Muir Trail (sworn to secrecy, I am unable to reveal any further geographical detail) when it began to rain, a steady, bone-chilling mountain rain. We stopped and put on our rain gear, covered our packs with ponchos and pushed on until we reached a flat, open area, a suitable campsite. Hurriedly, the rain still pelting us, we put up the tent and stashed our packs inside. While I dug a trench to divert water from the tent, Jeff scurried to the top of a granite ridge. In 15 minutes he was back with the news that, although I didn't know it at the time, I had been waiting 20 years to hear.

"There is a lake on the other side of that ridge that looks like a little bit

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Mosquitos in the High Sierra:

How to keep them from turning your dream vacation into a nightmare

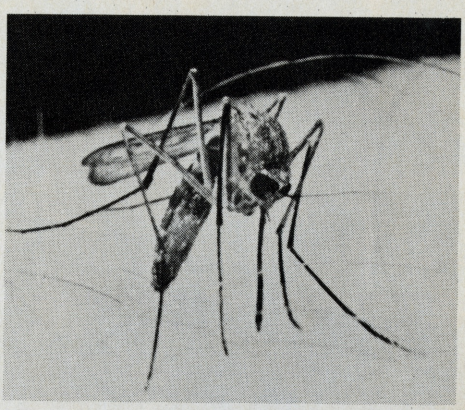

Photo courtesy of Cutter Insect Repellent

by Wendy Ellyn

Ah, the Sierra in summer. The meadows glimmer with bright wildflowers; the skies look so blue it almost hurts; the granite comes alive with alpenglow at dusk. Tranquility beckons and thousands of backpackers and fishermen respond, leaving their cities to enjoy the mountains' calm.

And then, from nowhere, *they* arrive. Those whining, persistent hoards that have turned more dream vacations into nightmares than any other backcountry pest: the mosquito.

Short of hiking the Sierra during snowstorms or after dark, what protection does the backcountry traveler have against such a versatile foe? Information and strategy, combined with a liberal dose of patience, go a long way.

We checked with mosquito expert Richard Garcia, a UC Berkeley entomologist, and developed the following guidelines for coping with even the thirstiest swarms:

1. Learn the enemy's habits.

Most high-elevation mosquitoes breed in pools formed by melting snow; below 4,000 feet, a majority prefer to breed in the water-filled nooks of trees. Keep in mind that snow melts earlier in the season at lower elevations, and mosquitoes develop earlier there as well.

Peak mosquito season may vary from year to year, depending on winter snowfall and spring and summer weather. However, in any given area, the mosquito problem seldom lasts more than a few weeks. A quick call to the National Park headquarters of the area you intend to visit can help you plan your trip to avoid the worst of the activity.

2. Conserve your energy.

A massive frontal assault will only take you so far. After swinging and slapping with open palms and bandannas, your triumphs may seem to mount, as black smears come to decorate the battlefield of your exposed flesh. And yet, this method ultimately proves inefficient, ineffective, and aggravating. You keep killing; they keep coming.

Outrunning the bugs is no answer either. By breaking camp early and moving quickly, you may succeed in avoiding the worst of the swarms, but you'll also turn your trip into a bitter race. A race that, ultimately, the hiker loses. Not because the mosquito is fast: although capable of moving in a burst of speed of a few mph, they typically fly much slower. The mosquito's edge lies in its ability to track down its target from a great distance, and to maneuver around that target — hovering patiently, zigzagging up and down, side to side, and even backward, until the time is right to bite.

Lured by your warmth and your expired carbon dioxide, a mosquito will move in for the attack. As it comes closer, it begins to detect your odor and prepares to land. Throughout, the only warning you have is that characteristic whine of little wings. But by the time the insect is close enough to hear, it is also close enough to begin to zero in

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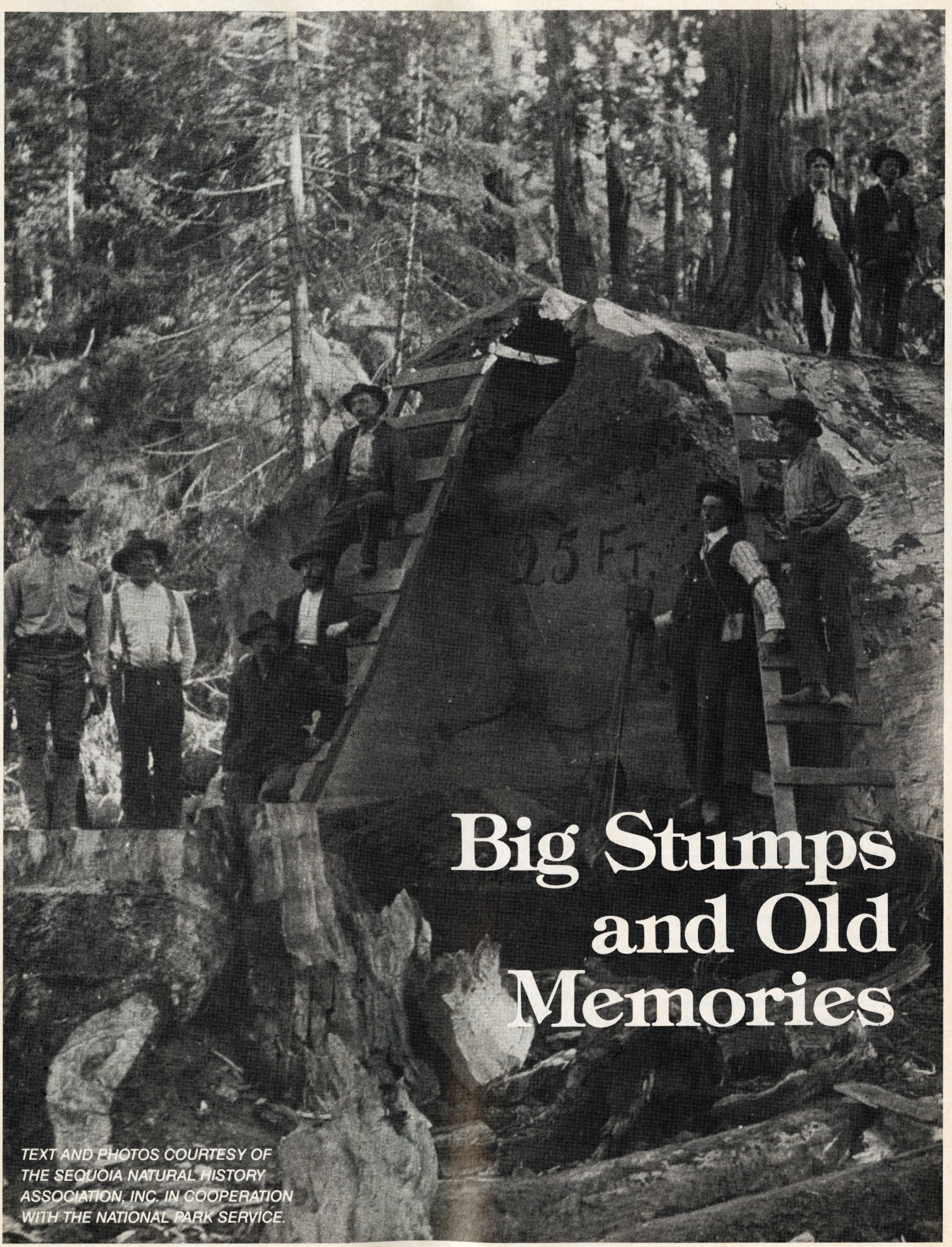


Big Stumps and Old Memories

TEXT AND PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SEQUOIA NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION, INC. IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.

The late 1800's witnessed the relentless movement of the logging industry into the virgin sequoia groves above the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Rugged and enterprising lumbermen clear cut their way through pristine forests in their quest for timber, leaving behind only stumps and denuded land.

In 1890 General Grant National Park was established through the persistent efforts of conservationists to preserve the General Grant Grove. Later this Park and the extensive Redwood Mountain Grove were included in Kings Canyon National Park established in 1940.

While Big Stump Basin is a significant part of our historical past, it is more importantly a cause for reflection—a potent reminder of man's fearful power in disrupting his natural environment. In this gutted grove, we may at least find a greater appreciation for the virgin groves that have been thoughtfully preserved.

In 1883 a logger came to Big Stump Basin to work. Following is the story he may have told if he returned today . . .

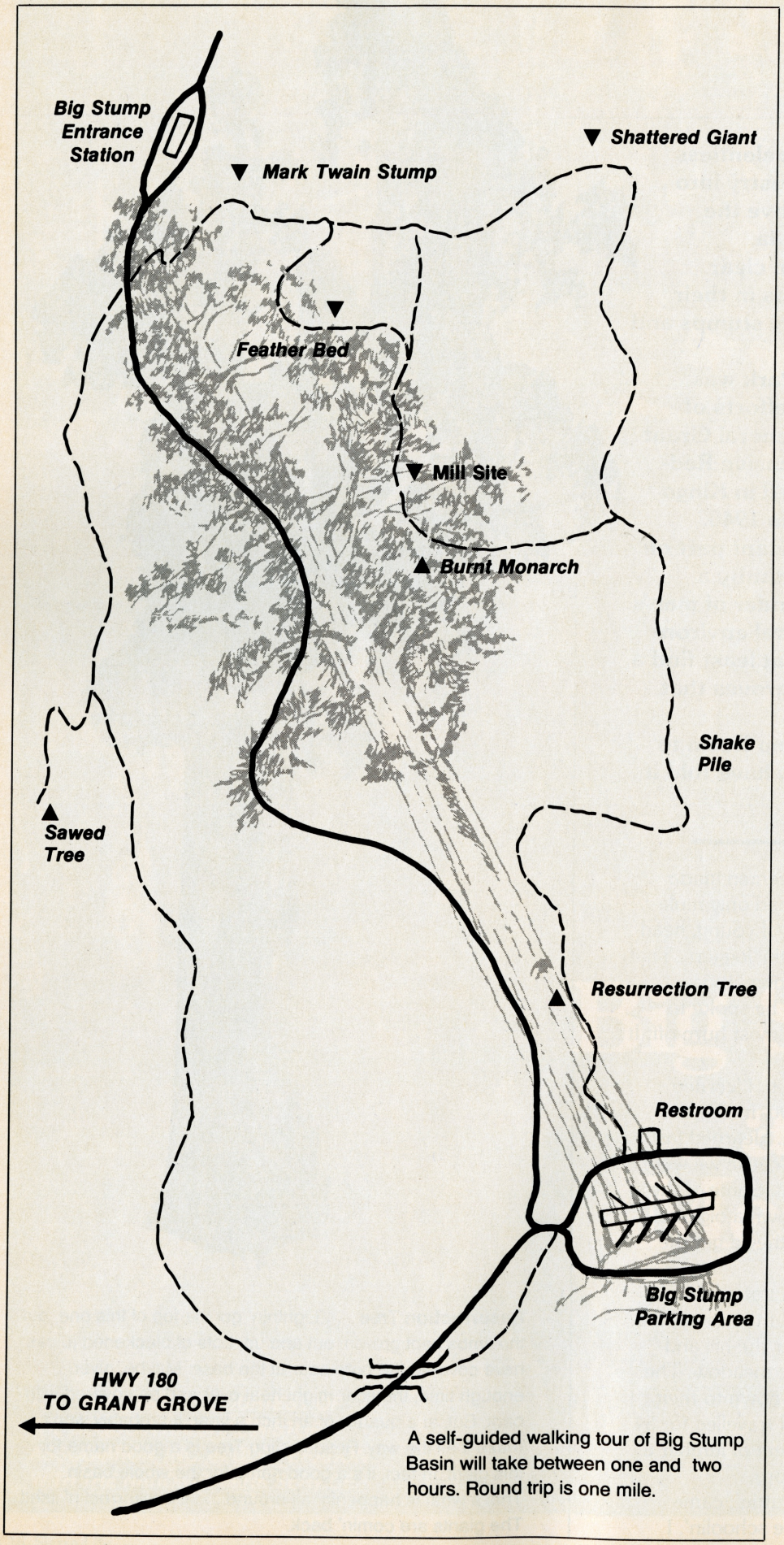
Comin' up here in an automobile seemed kinda strange to me. The first time we had only mule-driven wagons. There were loads of young, headstrong boys, ready to take on the job of bein' loggers. That first ride really scared me; the teamster runnin' those mules would scare anybody. Fact is, when he spoke to those mules, the bark of the trees would almost burn off. It was a nerve-rackin' way to start a new life.

I didn't know much about the giants, then. I learned later, after the park had been set up in 1890. In '83, all I wanted to know was how to get 'em down. I learned fast. Part of the excitement was the challenge, 'cause we were beginnin' to be men and wanted to prove it. Some of the oldtimers just wanted a chance to bring down a big one. They even had their pictures taken when they'd get the undercut done or after the tree was felled.

I worked here until 1889, then we ran out of cuttin' timber and decided to move the mill. About that time, the Sanger Lumber Company built a dam over the hill and formed the Sequoia Lake in a cow pasture meadow. The Company put up a flume goin' all the way down to their mill in the valley - cost about $300,000 and travelled for 54 miles. Why, it could carry 250,000 board feet of lumber a day! But, I'm gettin' a little ahead of my story.

What I learned about the giants, 'cept cuttin', came when I returned to the valley and got more schoolin'. I

Resurrection Tree . . . Lightnin' got the top of this one, but the limbs kept growin' out and up. Lots of blackened juices have covered the burn scar at the base. Maybe, given enough time, the scar might heal over and be covered with bark. But, at a quarter of an inch a year, it probably won't make it all the way. Resurrection Tree is a good name for this giant. In fact, it's a good name for the whole basin. That's what is happenin' all around . . . it's resurrectin' itself. The giants are comin' back.



A self-guided walking tour of Big Stump Basin will take between one and two hours. Round trip is one mile.

learned a lot of big words and a lot more simple truths about life and the world around us. We all got to learn to live with this world, to use only what we really need and is plentiful and to protect what is scarce and in danger of disappearin'.

When I first came in 1883, we only thought of cuttin' the big trees, not protectin' them. It was a long way back and this country has come a long way toward learnin' those simple truths.

Some Sequoia History

When I got back to my schoolin' in the valley, I learned some about nature, 'specially the giant sequoia and the forest they have ruled, I guess, since the last ice age.

The sequoia was the reason the area became a park in 1890. Men like John Muir, he was one of the country's greatest naturalists, and John Stewart, the editor of the Visalia Delta, and many others fought to protect the giant. I even heard there was a law passed in 1873 in Sacramento about not cuttin' trees over 16 feet across. Nobody obeyed it, then. When the struggle was over and the park was formed, we couldn't cut all the big trees, anymore. They had to be saved.

The sequoia is huge. Why, the General Sherman tree is about 275-feet tall and the General Grant tree is 40-feet across. There are a lot more just about as large. The giant grows big, like all the trees here, 'cause of the mild climate in the Sierra Nevada. Though a snow forest, winter daytime temperatures hardly ever remain below freezin', there's a long summer growin' season and plenty of springtime moisture. Would you believe that a mature sequoia needs about 300 gallons of water a day?

No tree grows bigger than the giant. The coast redwood, a cousin of the sequoia, is taller and the tule cypress, way down in Mexico, is thicker, yet none have the height and girth to make such a volume of

Continued on page 20

Burnt Monarch . . . They call it the Burnt Monarch now; we called it "Old Adam." Don't ask me why, 'cept maybe 'cause it was the biggest and oldest around. It was already burned when we arrived in '83 and were told it was that way when the Gamlin brothers came in 1863. Today, the Burnt Monarch would be called a snag, but then it was a stump. Maybe that's why the area is called the Big Stump Basin. We sure left a lot of big stumps ourselves. I remember we used to put spring snow inside the tree. It was just like an icebox and lasted until well into the summer. One year, we even had ice for makin' ice cream on the Fourth of July.

Featherbed . . . The giants are so brittle, we had to dig a trench called a featherbed and lay some branches in the hole to soften the fall. Also, we tried to fell the tree uphill to reduce the impact. It helped some, but you can still see waste in the featherbeds. We only used the part of the trunk below the first branches; it was better wood. The tree tops are still in the trenches.

Continued from page 18

tree. The bulk of the giant makes it the largest of livin' things.

Also, the giant has evolved (a schoolin' word) some interestin' characteristics for survival. The root system is only three to five feet below the surface, yet can spread out to cover more than two acres. As they get old, a fungus may attack the roots, weakenin' the tree and it may topple. That's how most of the giants die.

Fire, which destroys most everythin' else, is actually good for the sequoia in the long run. The giant has several defenses against fire. Its spongy bark is loaded with air spaces and up to 30-inches thick at the base. The bark is almost unburnable and is excellent insulation against the heat. Occasionally, the fire does burn through the bark into the wood, but food and water can travel up the unburned side of the big tree, keepin' the giant alive.

The giant sequoia is called a "fire dependent" tree. Seedlin's need more than moisture to germinate and a fire makes open space for sunlight, bare soil for minerals and eliminates the competition of other trees. Even seed distribution responds to the fire cycle. Most trees in the forest distribute their seeds upon maturity, but the giant keeps its seeds in closed, mature cones for as long as 20 years. Each year, more cones are produced, until there are thousands of cones on a single tree. Each cone has 100 to 300 kinda oatmeal-like seeds. You figure out how many seeds that makes. Most of the fires in the Sierra are ground fires, producin' updrafts of hot air which cause the cones to dry out and open. The seeds fall after a couple of weeks to what is clean soil—the fungi and insects are gone and the ground is moist, free of brush, and loaded with minerals. If only one seedlin' survives durin' the 1500-year lifespan of the giant sequoia, the number of trees would remain the same.

However, the giant sequoia has no defense against man, 'cept man himself. A giant can stand in one place for a thousand years, not really

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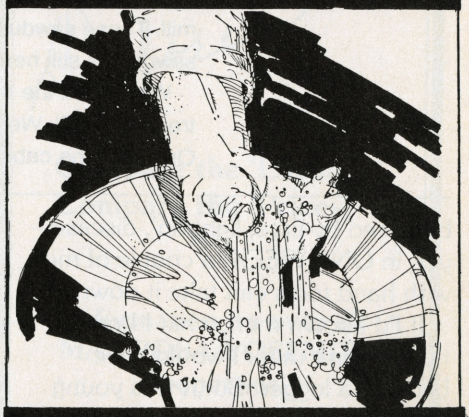

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Mill Site . . . I helped Smith Comstock (he owned the operation) build the mill in 1883. I wasn't much good for anythin' else, when I first came here. He ran it for six years, cuttin' sugar pines, firs, ponderosa and the giants. The charred pilin's by the edge of the meadow and the pile of rocks where the stream boiler was are all that's left of the mill. Those sawdust piles were collected from 1883 to '89 and are as fresh lookin' as new sawdust. If the sequoia sawdust is still here, how long do you think the large chunks are goin' to be around?

We moved the mill in 1889, after the good timber ran out. It was easier to move a mill than to try to bring the big trees to a mill. We moved the housin' as well. They were built on skids up by the big stump, the Burnt Monarch. On skids, the cabins could be moved to most anywhere. I guess you could call them the first mobile homes.

bothered by fires, lightnin', disease—yet, in ONE WEEK, a couple of men with hand tools can take it down.

If I'd known then, what I know now, I don't think I would have become a logger. But, I was young and rarin' to go!

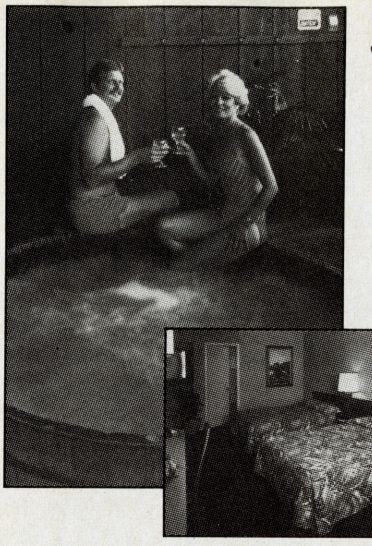
Other Growin' Things

There's a lot of other plants growin' here. The place where the giant grows is called a conifer forest with lots of tall trees and plants.

We cut all the big trees along with the giants. The ponderosa pine—with very long needles in bundles of three and bark that grows like large "plates"—we used to cut for our cabins and mill, 'cause it was so strong. Sugar pines, those trees with the big cones, were used for makin' cabinets and moldin's. Sugar pine has smaller "plates" of bark, shorter needles in clumps of five and long, sorta graceful and wide spreadin' branches. My favorite, maybe 'cause it makes such a good Christmas tree, is the white fir with short, single needles and silvery bark at the top. White fir wasn't used for much 'cept firewood. The incense-cedar was cut for makin' pencils, but many folks confuse 'em with sequoias, since the bark looks so similar and stringy. The bark doesn't feel the same, though, and the needles are quite different. One of the few deciduous trees (I learned that word) is the California black oak, kinda small for an oak, with deeply lobed, broad leaves.

There weren't as many bushes

then, but after we began cuttin', they came in real quick. I 'specially recall the mountain whitehorn, 'cause it scratches pretty bad, if you get tangled up in one. You might want to eat a young, green berry from the greenleaf manzanita—every greenhorn tried it-but watch out. They're kinda sour and feel like they're takin' all the water out of your mouth. 'Cept I heard that Indian women used to chew manzanita berries all day so they wouldn't need water when out gatherin'. The manzanita has roundish leaves and red bark—



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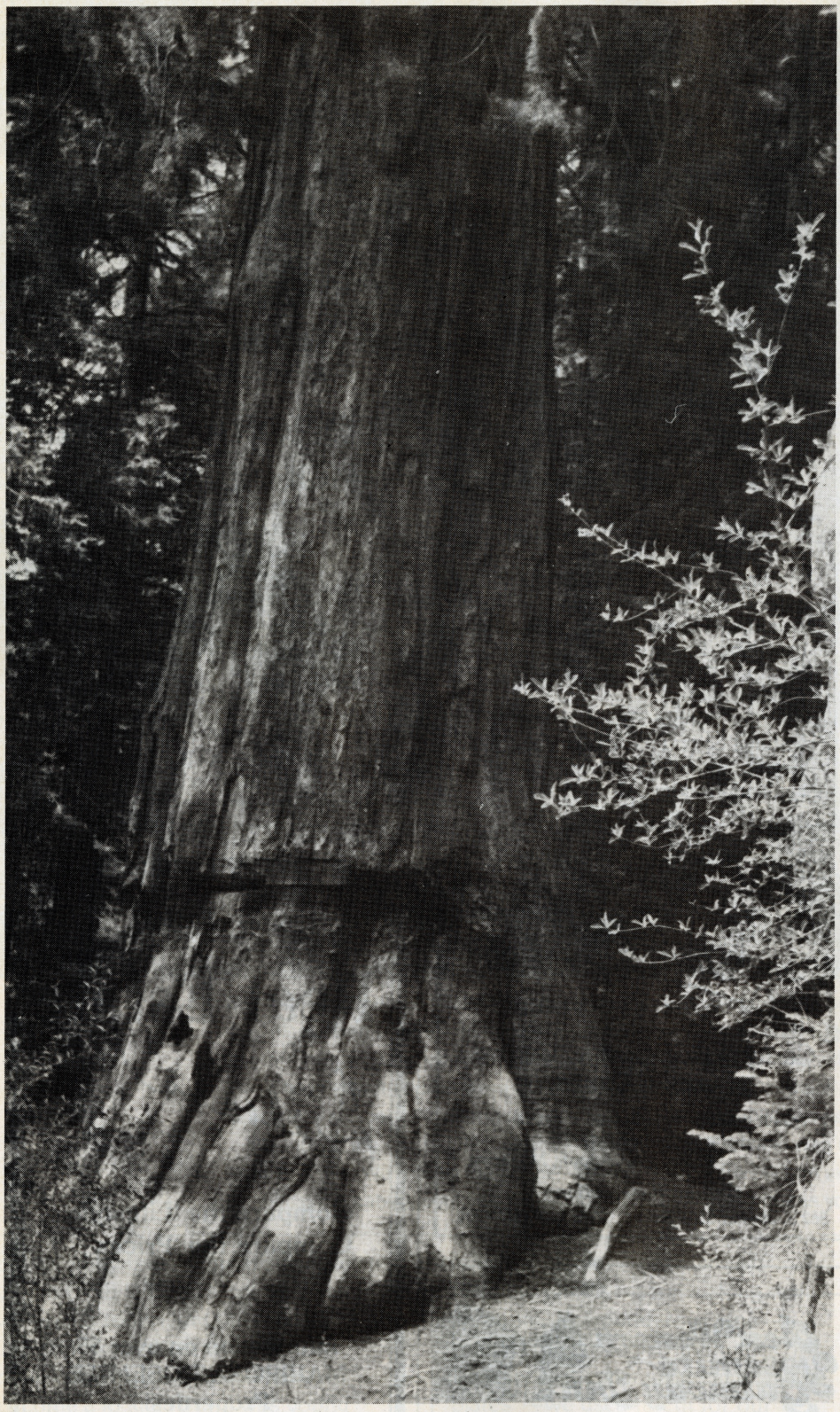

Sawed Tree . . . I can't remember the reason for not finishin' this giant. Maybe the foreman thought it wasn't plumbed right and wouldn't fall where he wanted it. Maybe Smith Comstock figured the tree might be in the new national park and didn't want to get into trouble. The Big Stump Basin didn't become a part of the park until later—1965, but we were pretty close to the boundary of the original General Grant Park. The tree has shifted a bit, but is still coverin' its scars and probably gettin' food and water from the uncut area.

almost like painted-on red. There are a lot of western azalea around, like in 1883, makin' the air smell just great in the late spring and early summer.

Creatures Around The Basin

When we first started cuttin', we didn't see too many animals around. The noise of the axes, saws and mallets kept 'em away. The mule deer and the coyote stayed far from all the action, 'cept when it was quiet at night. The black bear was quite a pest, just as he is today, if you don't put away your food when you're campin'. He raided our garbage and meandered around the cabins at night. We shot a lot of the large animals for food. Most have come back to their natural place. The grizzly and the wolf never will, I guess.

A lot of smaller animals and birds stayed around, often watchin' us work and gatherin' the seeds, berries and cones from our fallen timber. The chickaree or Douglas squirrel was here all the time mouthin' off in that constant chatter and complainin' about our bein' in his territory. He's good for the giant sequoia, 'cause he eats only the flesh of the cone and leaves the seeds. Sometimes, the seeds are spread around and some may germinate.

Ground squirrels, mice, woodrats, moles, gophers and others still are here. Some are busy only durin' the summer and can't survive the winter without hibernatin'. But the gopher, mole, mice and chickaree are always runnin' around.

Though we didn't cut durin' the winter, the forest must have been pretty busy. All the little creatures scurryin' for food, and the pine marten and coyote catchin' them, kept the place hummin', I guess. Still does.

Birds didn't like our noise, but in the mornin' they paid us back. They'd be up at first light. We'd like to wait to the last minute for the six-o'clock gong. We'd hear the noisy Stellar's jay, the rap . . . rap . . . rap

of a woodpecker and the squawk of a raven and wide awake we'd be. It was too darn early. I has some real good feelin's just listenin', though.

Walkin' The Big Stump

It sure brings back memories to be in the Big Stump. I can almost feel the double-bladed axe in my hands. If I listen real good, I can hear the rasp of the 20-foot-saw—misery whip, we called it. I learned to use all the tools—axe, long saw, froe and mallet—we needed 'em all to do the job. We were pretty rugged men. I was only 13 when I started, but I learned quick and seemed to grow even quicker. Why, by the time I was ready to leave the basin, I could knock off a five-pound wood chip

Shake Pile . . . We used most of this giant. The stump is still about a hundred feet down the path—the trunk was cut into shakes and stakes and carted away. Fellin' it uphill saved most of the tree for use, but there are still some culls about. They weren't too good 'cause they were twisted and gnarled. We used a froe and a mallet to cut the wood the way we wanted. The froe is like a cleaver and we'd whack it down into the wood, then hit it on top with a mallet, twistin' the froe as the mallet struck. Most of the time, we got a nice, clean shingle or shake—if we were good at it.

Shattered Giant . . . This big tree must have been cut after the mill was gone, 'cause it sure doesn't look like a professional logger put it down. It was felled downhill and across a stream and rocks; most of it shattered and wasn't any good. That's somethin' we never would have done. Sometimes though, we ruined good wood ourselves. We'd drill holes in the felled trunk and put in black powder to break the tree into smaller sections. Often, it would make quite a mess of the wood, mostly unusable.

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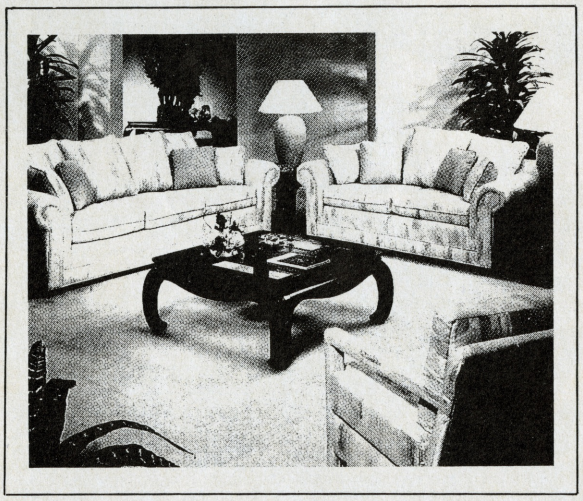

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with one swing of my axe.

We just kept cuttin'; it never seemed to end. We worked twelve hours a day for six days a week at a dollar a day—up to three dollars as we learned more skills.

Cuttin' a sequoia sure isn't the same as cuttin' a tree in your backyard. You've got to plan where they're goin' to fall. The base of the tree is kinda swelled out and too much to cut, so we'd put up a scaffoldin' to the straightest part. Then, we'd make undercuts with an axe on one side in the direction we wanted the tree to fall. The long saw was used on the opposite side for the final slicin'. Wedges were driven into the cut, as we sawed, to keep the saw from bindin' and lean the tree toward the fall site. The giant is so brittle, it would break up much of the time. You can still see loads of waste around the basin.

The wood is slow to decay and even the sawdust looks pink and fresh. Probably, it's all that tannin' in the wood and the insects and fungi can't seem to digest it. Since it was so brittle and there was so much twisted wood, the big tree was only good for shingles, shakes and stakes for grape vines and fence posts. About 50- to 75-percent of the tree went to waste. The giants really weren't too much good for profitable timber.

It seemed right, then, cuttin' the giants for houses and homesteads and helpin' the country grow. It doesn't seem right anymore. But the past is gone and I'm glad to see how the grove is comin' back. What is here is called second growth . . . the forest reborn and resurrectin'.

Though we didn't know it then, we may have helped the giant . . . just a little. We cleared the land and burned our slash (waste), removin' the undergrowth, dead wood and needles. We opened the area with our cuttin', providin' prime growin' land for the giant's seedlin's. Why, it's only been . . . never mind . . . and look how everythin's comin' back. Bein' protected, the Big Stump Basin may become another forest of giant sequoia trees. It may take 2,000 years, but it's goin' to happen.

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"Pete" Starr's Legacy

by Eldridge F. Trott

Walter Augustus Starr, Jr., died at 4:30 that August afternoon, high up on the face of Michael's Minaret, some 400 feet above a glacier that drapes the base of the peak. Perhaps in his last few seconds he saw his camp site far below him and about a mile away on the shores of Lake Ediza.

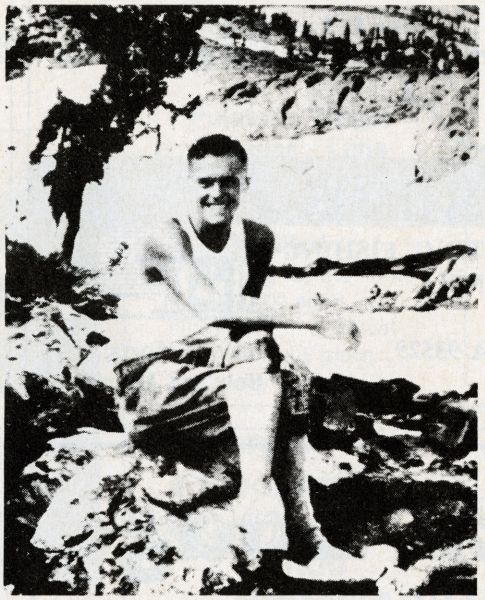
The date may have been Wednesday, August 2, 1933. Or perhaps it was Tuesday. He died as he often traveled in the Sierra Nevada, alone.

The time seems accurate. The force of impact at the end of his 300-foot fall broke his wrist watch and flung it from his body to a narrow ledge below. The watch stopped at 4:30.

Walter A. "Pete" Starr, Jr.

He had nicknamed himself, "Peter." He loved the high places, the land of rocks. Thus, perhaps Petra . . . Peter.

Climbing Michael's Minaret—if that is the last thing he did that day—would have proved challenging, but not an extraordinary feat for this 30-year-old man, already renowned for his endurance and mountaineering feats. He already had scaled all of the major peaks in the Minarets, in addition to more than 40 main peaks between Yosemite Park and Sequoia Park.



Walter A. "Pete" Starr, 1932. Photo by Harley C. Stevens Courtesy of the Sierra Club Library.

So, it had to be a freak accident, possibly resulting from a moment of haste, that took Starr's life. The tragedy stunned his family and his many friends. In retrospect, considering his talent and his great potential, it seemed such a terrible loss.

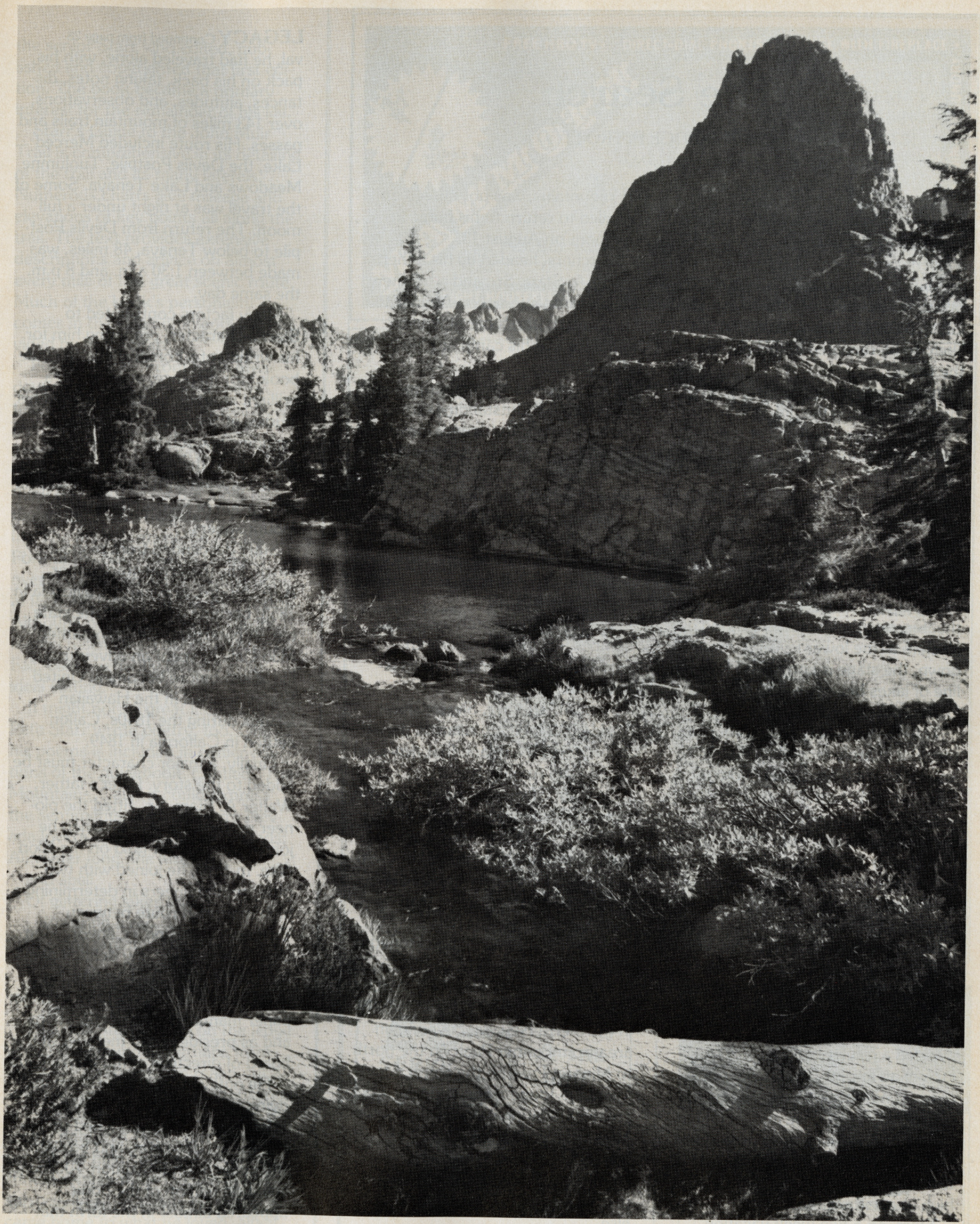
But, in some respects, it's as though Pete Starr never died. Or, in the scheme of things, there was a purpose to all of the tragedy.

Pete Starr's words annually guide thousands of hikers who move along the John Muir Trail. They carry the red-backed book entitled, "Starr's Guide to the John Muir Trail and the High Sierra Region," and frequently refer to it at a fork in the trail or for possible camping sites late in the afternoon. The book, published by the Sierra Club and now in its 12th edition, was born of Pete Starr's life and death. It has remained the standard reference to the John Muir Trail over the past half century.

Starr commenced planning for the guidebook in 1929, just two years after completing law school at Stanford University. In the introduction to the book, Starr wrote, "By joining the United States Geological Survey maps of the region from the Yosemite National Park to the headwaters of the Kern—a distance of more than 150 miles—one will observe a continuous strip of blue lakes running down the map immediately west of the Sierra Crest. Through the heart of this blue strip winds the famous John Muir Trail with laterals leading to it from the east and the west, some of them vying with the Muir Trail itself in scenic grandeur."

Starr spent all of his vacations and many of his holiday weekends in the High Sierra, collecting copious notes. The 10th edition of the guidebook relates a classic example of his exploratory skills. According to his diary, he left Yosemite Valley at noon, Saturday, September 6, 1930, and returned to the valley the following Wednesday at 6 a.m. In the inter-

Continued on page 30



UPPER MINARETS CREEK

BRENDA STONE PHOTO

The Search

by ELDRIDGE F. TROTT

They gathered at the base of The Minarets in mid-August, 1933, a flock of eagles dedicated to the search for a fallen companion. These eagles were a select group of men who lived on intimate terms with the high and lonely places. It was a gathering not likely to be repeated in this part of the world.

In this setting, a grand and glorious region along the John Muir Trail, was played out one of the sadder episodes in Sierra Nevada history.

As one faces west, Banner and Ritter Peaks anchor the range on the right, and The Minarets fill in the scene directly ahead and to the left. They all combine to create a magnificent boundary for a natural amphitheater, one that includes a string of glaciers at the lower levels. Farther down, the stage is completed by a line of lakes bearing such names as Ediza, Iceberg and Cecile.

The Minarets consist of a serrated range of sharply etched peaks known by such names as Leonard, Clyde and Michael. It was on the latter, an upthrust spire of granite reaching 1,500 feet from its base, that Walter A. "Pete" Starr died.

It seems likely that he had reached its summit that day and was descending to his base camp at Lake Ediza in the late afternoon. He had explored other peaks in previous days, using an ice ax and crampons to traverse the glaciers. On this day, he left the equipment in camp. He avoided a glacier by crossing the face of an abrupt cliff above it. The top of a triangular rock providing a hand hold came loose and, acting as a fulcrum, cast him away from the cliff and into free fall. He plunged 300 feet before coming to rest on a ledge high above the glacier.

Starr, on a two-week vacation, and accustomed to traveling alone in the mountains, was not missed until he failed to return to his home in Piedmont on August 13.

Searchers, headed by his father, Walter A. Starr, Sr., and a brother, Allan, swung into action August 14. They found Starr's car at Agnew Meadows and his camp at Lake Ediza that day.

The eagles started gathering the following day. Outstanding mountain climbers joining the search included Glen Dawson and Dick Jones from Los Angeles, and Jules Eichorn, Lowell Hardy, Mike Sutro, Whiting Welch and Allan and Walter Starr from Oakland. Oliver Kehrlein and Norman Clyde, at the time exploring glaciers in the Palisades area, joined them the next day.

Already in the search was a 12-member team from Mammoth, headed by Chief Ranger Douglas Robinson.

Francis Farquhar, Sierra Club president, joined the team as an observer in an airplane that flew over the area on August 16.

Norman Clyde may have been the premier mountaineer of his day. A man of remarkable endurance, he would climb 1,500 peaks, 20 of them first ascents, in his mountain climbing career. Clyde Peak in The Minarets is named for him.

He and Starr had climbed together a number of times.

This team spread out in a search of some of the most rugged country in the Sierra Nevada, covering an area from Banner Peak on the north to Minaret Pass on the south. Members found a line of ducks creating a daring path up Clyde's Minaret, a portion of a handkerchief identified as Starr's, and a half-smoked cigarette bearing the brand that he smoked. They found little else.

Continued on page 58

LEGACY Continued from page 28

val, he had traveled alone, with his pack on his back, taking notes, distances, altitudes, and observations, over 143 miles of mountain trails and passes. His route included Merced Lake, the Devils Postpile, Tuolumne Meadows and Lake Tenaya. Some of the travel was at night under a full moon. The return from Devils Postpile to below Tenaya, 48 miles, was made between 1:30 a.m. and 8 p.m. the same day.

Many factors contributed to Starr's character, preparing him for his writing of a comprehensive guide book. For instance, academics: a brilliant student, Starr completed his studies at Stanford University, including law school, in five years rather than the normal seven.

He traveled with and knew well an elite group of Sierra Nevada mountaineers.

Starr descended from pioneer stock. His maternal grandfather, A. A. Moore, arriving in California in 1853, became a leader of the state bar. A paternal great-grandfather, Milo Calkin, spent an adventurous life at sea before becoming United States counsel in the Hawaiian Islands during the 1840s. Calkin settled in Calfornia in 1849.

Finally, a major character must be added to the story. Peter's father, Walter A. Starr, Sr., fitted the pioneer pattern. He was 20 when he joined the rush for gold on the Klondike. In 1895, he joined with two other mountaineers in determining a high mountain route between Yosemite and King's Canyon, long before there were any defined plans for a John Muir Trail. In time he would serve as an executive in major paper manufacturing corporations and as president and member of the board of directors of the Sierra Club.

He outlived his son by 36 years, dying in 1969 at the age of 92.

In 1934, the father picked up the ball for his dead son, and brought the guide book to fruition. Although that first edition of the book appeared almost in the form that Peter Starr had envisioned, it was

the senior Starr who edited, published and copyrighted that first edition. The book became a primary interest for the remainder of his life.

Starr's Guide to the John Muir Trail is comprehensive in its detailing of the trail and its many laterals. Numerous charts give mileage and elevations of key points all along the trail. The text provides extensive descriptions and advice on almost every mile of this great scenic route. Much of the book's personality comes in the side comments provided by Peter Starr.

For instance: "From Reds Meadow a detour of about two miles takes us down the river to Rainbow Fall, the trail leading to the cliffs above the river from which the best view of the fall may be enjoyed . . . I think Rainbow Fall is the most beautiful in the Sierra outside of Yosemite. The full volume of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin plunges over the cliff into a misty sunlit pool at its base, where the rainbow forms. Although not notable for its height, the fall resembles Yosemite's Vernal Fall, being perfectly formed in an ideal setting."

It might not be great literature, but Pete Starr wrote poetry, too. One of his poems is included in earlier editions of the guidebook. Entitled "The Mountains' Call," it could express the sentiments of many Sierra Nevada lovers. The second verse reads:

All winter long, the lure
and spell
Of glittering lakes and
towering trees,
Of rushing streams and pine-
tree smell
And flowering meadows
haunted me."

They left Starr's body on the ledge where they found it. Perhaps from this eagle's aerie he can reach out a spiritual hand to guide the thousands of hikers who flow along the trail. It seems right that Pete Starr, who sought the high and lonely places, should remain there in such grand surroundings. In a way, he simply came home to what he loved, albeit early.

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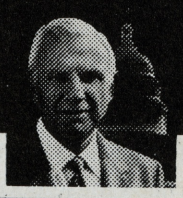

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High-Stepping the Rock Stompers

Our slightly lighter-than-lead rock stompers are out. The new lightweight hiking boots are in.

by D.L. Llewellyn

For many years, as many as I can remember, I've been an avid hiker; one who has strenuously advocated the use of sturdy rock-stompers with rough outers. Recently I purchased my first pair of lighter-than-lead hiking boots. I was absolutely certain they would disintegrate into a pile of unrecognizable fragments on the first really tough trail but I had succumbed to the most powerful marketing tool in the free world; the "On Sale" sign. Who among us can resist a good sale?

Much to my delight I discovered that my new boots did not require the usual 150 mile break-in. They were positively comfortable from the very first day. The Earth-gripping lug soles would even bend. This was a tremendous accomplishment considering the fact that my mountaineering boots were three years old, had trekked the Rockies, Sierra Nevada, most of the southwestern deserts and still required a well placed level to bend the soles. I was weakening. Perhaps these boots were more desirable than I had thought.

The trail I chose to test them on was a tough one. Steep switchbacks covered with colluvium, underlain by clayey soil made the perfect torture track for me to prove that these so called "hiking boots" were little more than glorified tennis shoes. To add a bit of spice to the test, it was raining.

Three streams had to be crossed by rock-hopping and I made another wonderful discovery; the lightweight boots allowed me great stability on the rocks because I could feel what the rocks were doing under my feet. The slightest unstable movement was transmitted immediately, giving me ample time to alter my course. I was impressed.

The next question in my mind was, are the boots going to be tougher than the rocks or vice versa? If anything is going to tear up a pair of boots it's certainly going to be a combination of sandstone and limestone colluvium. I had retained the box and receipt for returning the remains. Surprised again! The rubber reinforced toes and suede outers came through virtually unmarred.

Was this a dream? Was I having hiking boot hallucinations? The answer was clear. My beloved rock-stompers had been bested by the deadly perpetrator of obsolescence; technology.

But wait, there was still one more test. Could the double-mesh nylon upper inserts repel enough water to keep my feet from turning into prune-like appendages? My sock layers were quite basic; a thin polypropelene liner with a bulk wool-polypropelene outer. By this time I was gaining confidence in the performance of the lightweight boots and was actually hoping for another victory on their behalf.

At the trailhead I had made some cynical remarks to my hiking companion concerning how wet our feet would probably be at the end of the day. She was wearing the same type of boots. I was sure we would suffer the unforgivable discomfort of soaked feet. Need I tell you? Wrong again. At least there was nothing else I could be wrong about.

Was I totally impressed? Nay, flabbergasted! I couldn't believe that such a light pair of hiking boots could perform so well. My hat was off and my mouth was full of crow. The lightweight boots had been surprisingly victorious.

I'm sure by now you must be a bit curious about the brand of boots I was wearing, but my purpose is not to advocate any particular boot because I have discovered that there are several brands that will perform equally as well. Alright! Stop twisting my arm! I'll tell, I'll tell! They were Hi-Tec Sierra Lites.

As you can surely guess, I now

have nothing but praise for lightweight boots. I still maintain, however, that every foot and every wearer has different requirements in hiking boots.

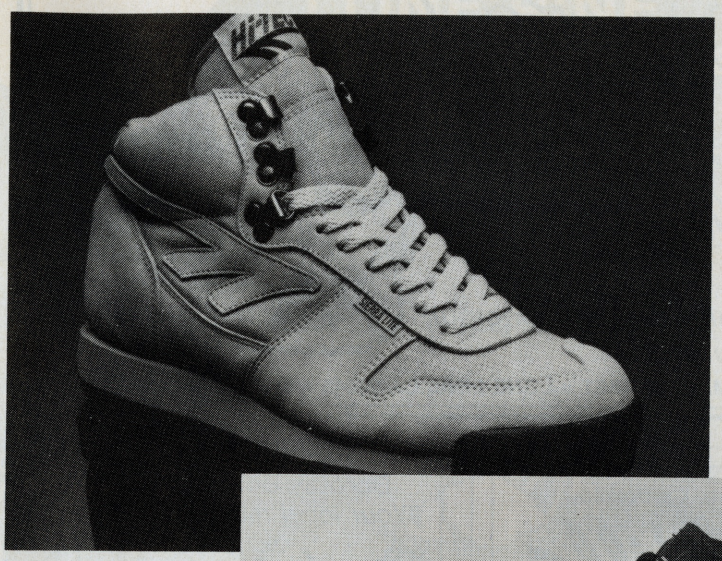
There is no one perfect boot to suit all needs. Although the Hi-Tecs performed well in my situation, you may have different requirements to meet. For one thing, not all manufacturers make boots to fit all feet. As an example, Hi-Tec boots tend to run a bit narrow.

If my point here has been well taken, you may be interested in some information that will help you get started in your search for lightweight boots.

In order of price, there are four models that seem to stand out: Hi-Tec's Sierra Lites and P.C.T., New Balance Cascade and Vasque Sundowner.

Sierra Lites are priced about $35.00 and have a sister model for the ladies called the Lady Lite. The structural difference is an over-the-toe reinforcement in the Sierra Lite that is missing in the Lady Lite. I guess girls aren't suppose to scuff their toes. These models have very low profile ankles to eliminate the agony of "squeak heel," a rather unpleasant malady. The soles are lugged rubber; uppers are a combination of double-mesh nylon and suede. Average weight is 1.6 lbs. The only drawback I can see to these boots is the lower shoestring eyelets. They are simple cut-throughs with no reinforcement. It should also be noted that these boots can not be fully waterproofed. Even with silicon spray treatment the nylon will only repel a modest amount of water. The rain I tested them in was a light rain. They performed well, as I said, but a driving rain would have been another story.

The Hi-Tec P.C.T.'s are virtually the same as the Sierra Lite except for the heel. The P.C.T. has a full heel for greater stability which increases the weight to about 2 lbs. Cost is about $40.00. These do not have a sister model but come in small enough sizes to accommodate most ladies' feet. All three models



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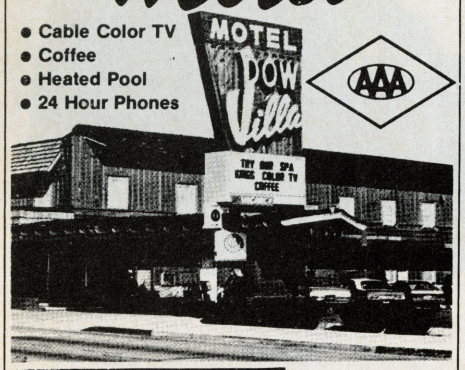

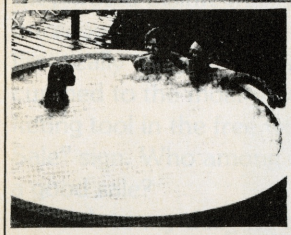

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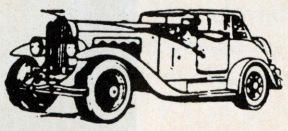

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have removable insoles.

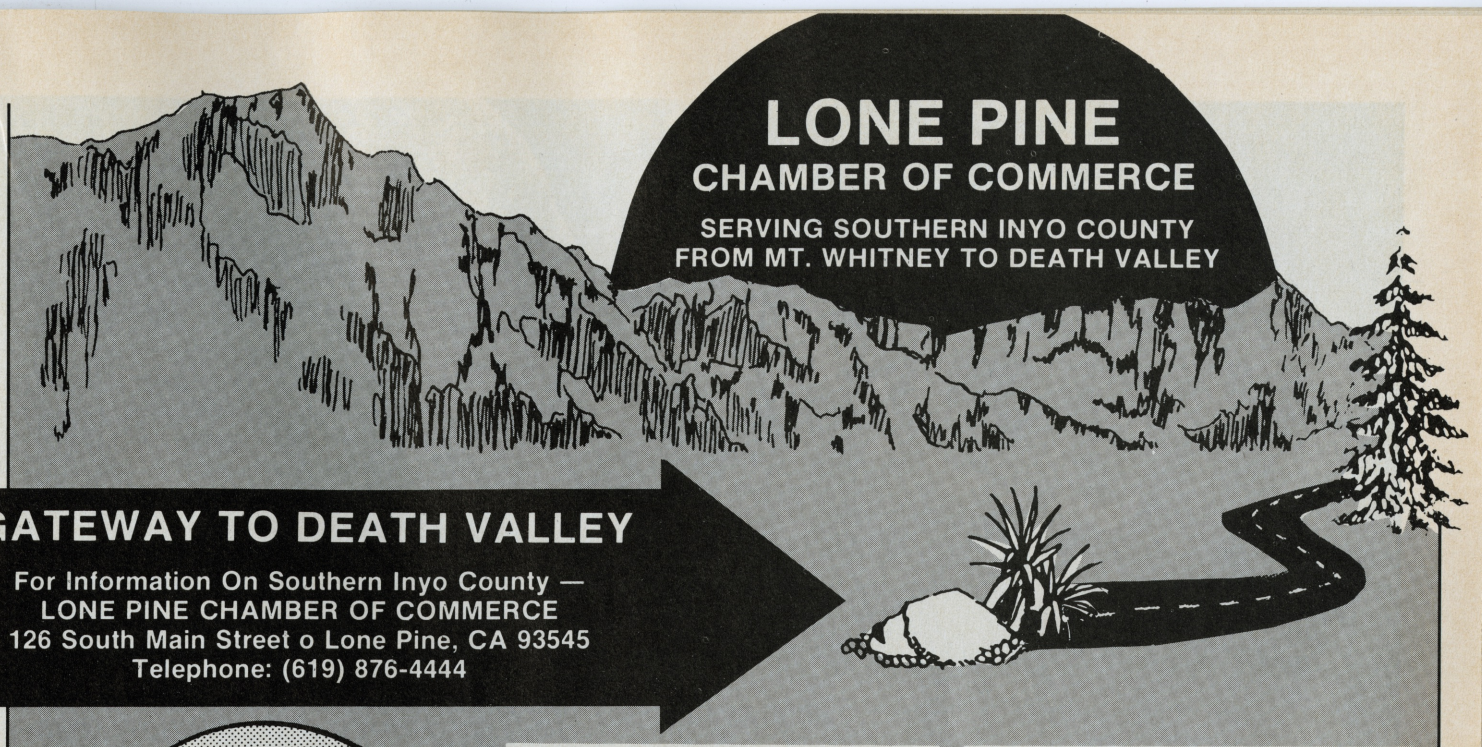
The New Balance Cascade is another excellent boot with a few finer features. In the upper, smooth leather replaces suede and 500 denier, coated cordura is used instead of nylon. The heel is full height, but tapered for flexibility. All lacing points are metal D-rings and there is a removable insole. Average weight is 2 lbs. 6 oz. Cost is about $80.00. Unfortunately, there are some size restrictions (according to Campmor). This boot comes in only two widths; D and EE. Further, the Cascade is not offered in ladies sizes and the smallest man's size is 6. The advantage to these boots is the heavy-duty uppers that will take more punishment and their ability to be more fully waterproofed.

For those who require the maximum in waterproofing there is the Vasque Sundowner. The outer is smooth, one-piece, full-grain leather. The liner is Gore-Tex. All lacing points are metal and there is a removable insole. Average weight is 2 lbs. 12 oz. and cost is about $90.00. This boot is offered in ladies sizes. As to quality and durability, it's Vasque, what more needs to be said.

There are many other brands of lightweight boots on the market, but after examining the ones mentioned above I feel they are the best buys. They are all rugged, well made and bare no resemblance to carrying an anvil on one's foot.

So now I'm a convert. My trusty old rock-stompers have been patiently awaiting their next trip, but to no avail. They're lonely, sitting in that far corner of the closet. Maybe from time to time I'll take them out, lovingly caress them with mink oil to keep their leather soft and supple, then put them back into the corner. Yes, sometimes even good relationships have to come to an end.

Next month I have another backpacking trip planned that will take me to the 13,000 foot summit of Mt. Humphries in northern Arizona. Another trip for me and my Sierra Lites. Until then I'll just sit around hoping that someone will come up with a 6,000 c.i. backpack that weighs 2 lbs. Hey North Face, how about it?



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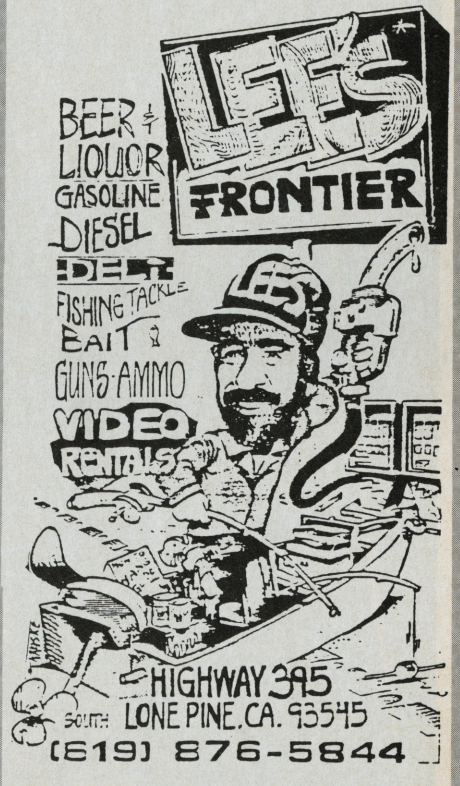

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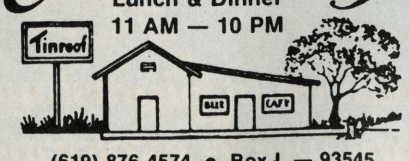

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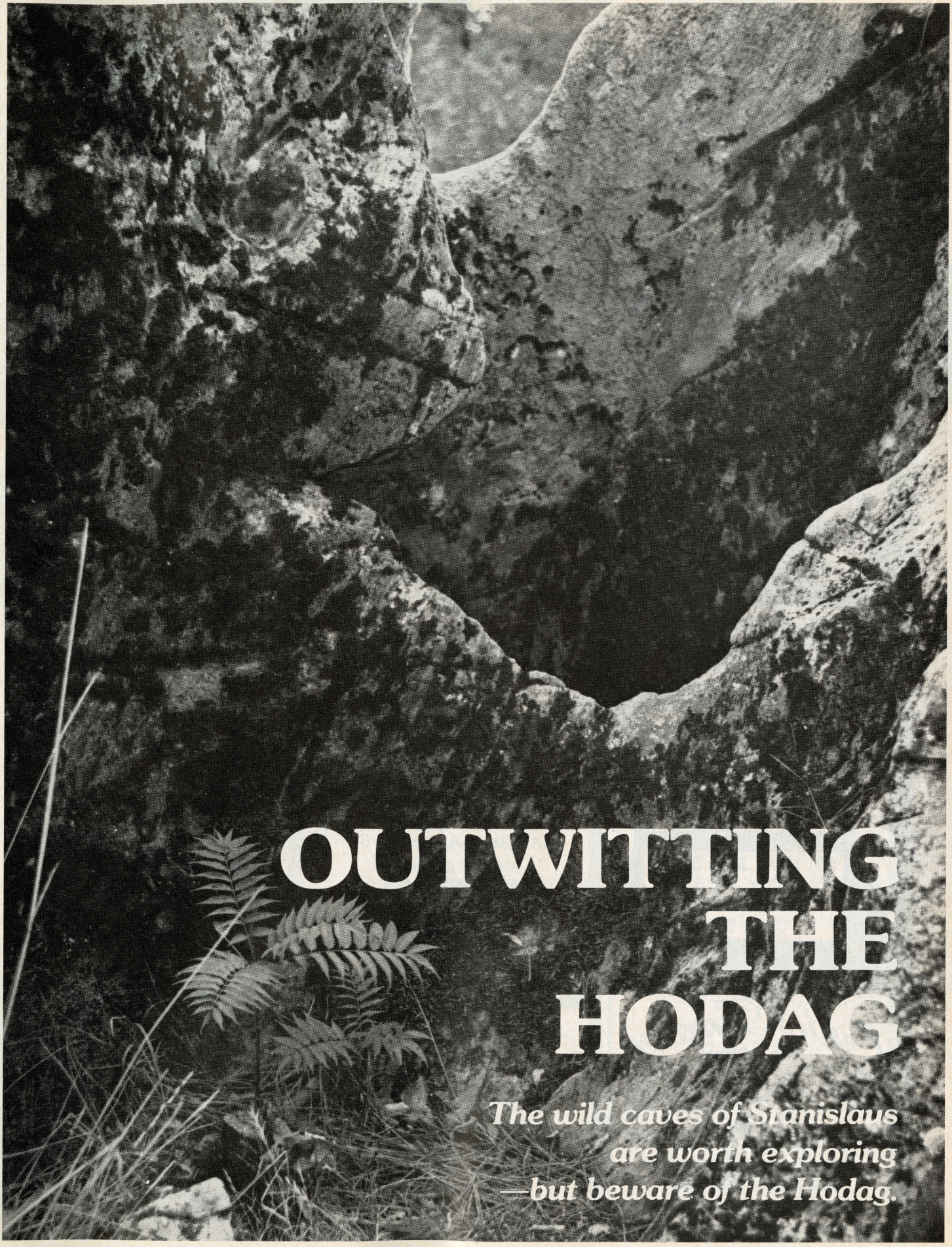


OUTWITTING THE HODAG

The wild caves of Stanislaus are worth exploring —but beware of the Hodag.

Text and photos by Feliz Guthrie

Ralph Squire crouched to the gritty stone and waited for the Hodag to appear. He was a hundred feet down. A hundred feet of solid marble vaulted the motionless space above him. The surface of the earth was only an aching memory of sunlight on golden grass. Light! Light was the lifeline he had carried in. Light was the treasure he had lost. He knew he should have brought a spare flashlight and a candle stub. He knew he should not have come into the cave alone.

Ralph Squire is a California-born speleologist and a long-time resident of the region around the New Melones Reservoir of the Stanislaus River where there are many wild caves as well as the better known, commercial ones such as Mercer, Moaning, and California Caverns. As Chairman of the New Melones Task Force, sponsored by The National Speleological Society, Squire spearheaded efforts to conserve the wild caves and reserve corresponding land areas when the New Melones Dam was built in the 1970's.

But even experts are fallible. When he found himself without light in a black pocket of the Earth, Squire knew he had only himself to blame. He had disregarded his own basic rules for cave exploration:

1) *Never explore alone.* Three people are even safer than two. Four is the ideal number. If one of the team is injured, somebody can stay with him while the other two go for help, protecting each other up on the way out.

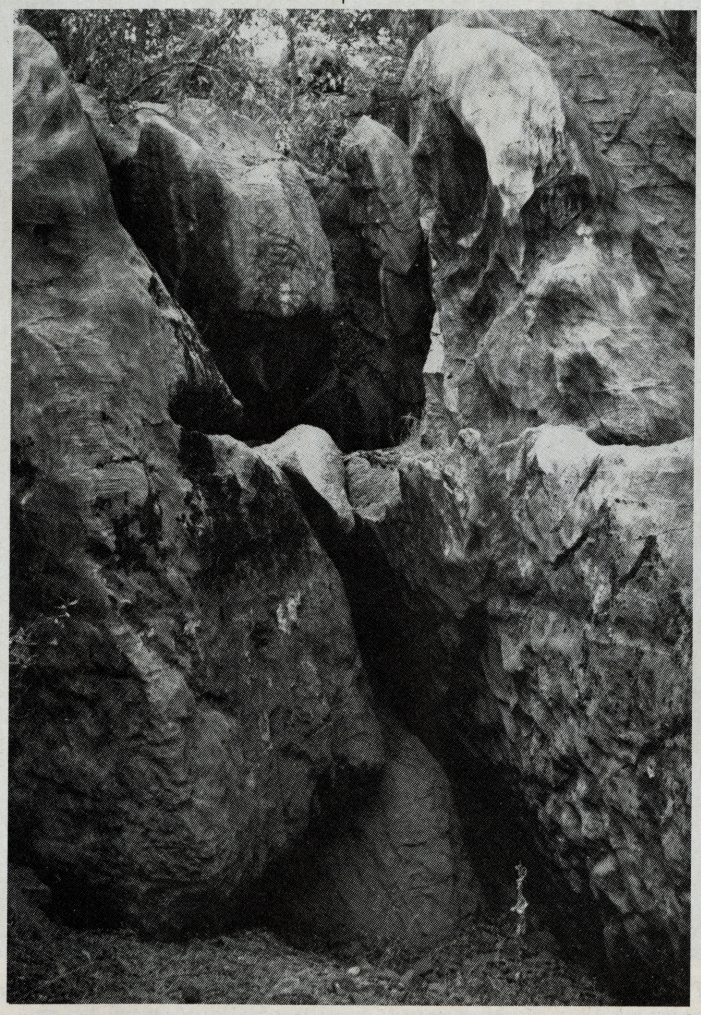
2) *Take three light sources*; one primary, such as a helmet lamp, and two backups. Batteries fail at the least appropriate times.

3) *Wear a hardhat.* "Caving" is often mountain climbing in reverse, so you may also need a rope to get down . . . and back!

4) *When you lose your light, wait for rescue!* Don't try to find your own way out.

Muffled by the heavy darkness, Squire waited for someone topside to notice his absence. He hoped they would come to find him before the Hodag did.

What's a Hodag? By the light of day, the answer is amusing. Lost in a cave's oblivion, it can be truly terrifying. Hodag is the nickname given to visual hallucination caused by prolonged *sensory deprivation* in a cave's natural, total darkness. It isn't only sight that's lost. Under the earth, all familiar cues are gone. The silence is deafening. There is no perceptible movement of air. Temperature remains virtually constant at the average of all the temperatures of the region above ground—including the yearly extremes. In winter, caves are warmer than the outside; in summer, cooler. Without the normal, constant changes of light and temperature, a person also loses his sense of time. Without time, sentience, and sight, the word *lost* takes on a new meaning.



Outcroppings have a carved, alien look, totally unlike other surface rock.

Deprived of his sense of direction, often of equilibrium, a caver may tumble into the gaping hole of a *vadose tube*: the shaft cut by water flowing, film-like, down vertical cracks or faults in the living stone. *Vadose tubes* may also be slanted ramps or a series of steps. In contrast, *phreatic tubes* are formed along *bedding planes* in the stone. Such passages are bored by natural hydraulic pressure as water is pulled downward by gravity and seeks the course of least resistance through the rock layers. When the land rises and the water table lowers, these former underground waterways are left as dry, horizontal corridors.

Limestone is the rock most commonly associated with caves. The caves of the Stanislaus, especially near the town of Columbia, are formed of marble. *In* marble, it might be more accurately said.

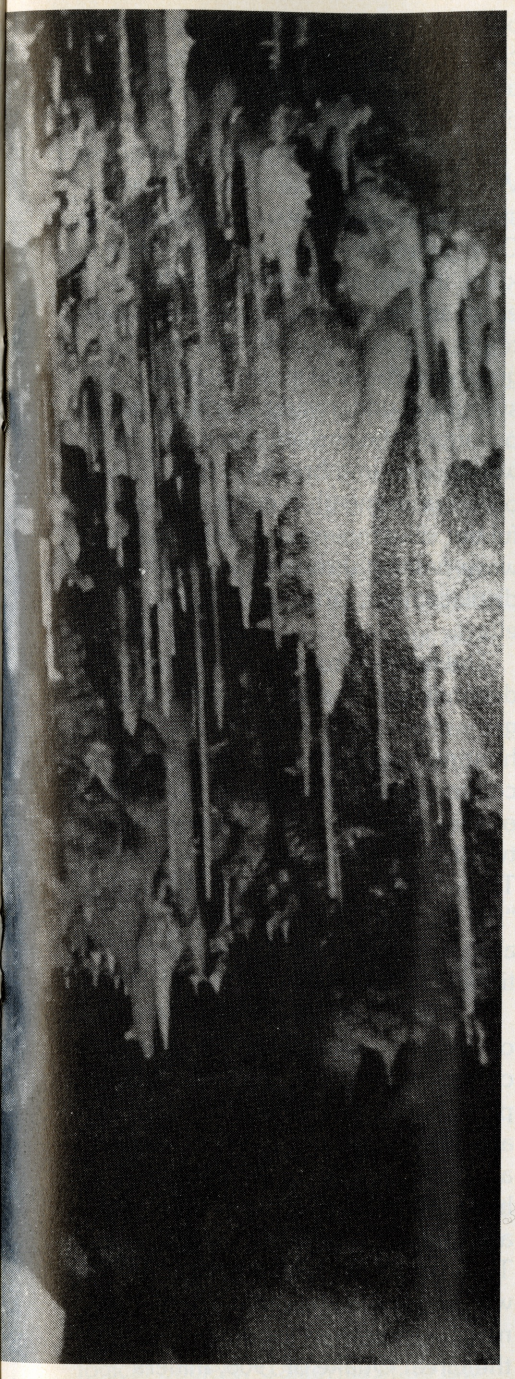
The region around the New Melones Reservoir was once the edge of the sea. Coral and other marine life grew on

gigantic atolls just off shore. But as geologic ages passed and the Pacific Plate rammed its eastern neighbor, the land rose, draining the sea. Aeons of constant change buried and converted the atolls to limestone. The Sierra Nevada reared and wrinkled. Molten magma bubbled up, heated by unimaginable pressures that were great enough to bend and break the very bones of Earth. Like bursting wounds, volcanos gushed their lava flows across the buried sea-bed, sent magma rolling to meet the waters of the new oceanic shore. The limestone of the ancient atolls, heated both by pressure and by convection from upwelling magma, metamorphosed: cooked to marble. Eventually, the magma cooled to granite. Layers of earth and ash were laid by wind, rain and river atop the whole.

High in the Sierra, the Stanislaus was born of ice and snow . . . and still is. Relentlessly, its waters run; down and down, over the surface and under the ground. Any crack, any weakened crease or pocket is widened as the rock itself dissolves away, carried with the trickle, with the dripping, with the hidden sieving of the waters through the stone. Tiny chambers grow to larger ones, to vaulted rooms and tunnels, twisting corridors and sheer-fall shafts.

Many of the wild caves of the Stanislaus are especially beautiful, with an abundance of stalactites hanging like massive alabaster chandeliers from seepage corners. Columns or bee-hive shapes have built up from the floor.

Caves fascinate people for a variety of reasons. For some, it is the thrill of discovering a place that no other eyes have ever seen, a place more hostile to life than the arctic or



The fastest growing stalactites increase only an inch in length every four hundred years. David Squire Photo

the desert; a place where nothing grows except calcium and mineral deposits, where no light has ever shown, where the air itself has never been breathed. Here, the Earth becomes a presence, a strange, almost alien entity without its mask of Life. There is awesome energy locked up in the stone that can be sensed, however subtly. For others, the fascination is that of "solving the 3-dimensional crossword puzzle" of the underground system of cavities and corridors.

In any case, the riches to be found in the caves of the Stanislaus are not in the form of gold. There are no hidden hoards, in spite of lingering rumors about Joaquin Murieta's buried treasure. But there is treasure of a sort for those who value it. Fossils, artifacts, and rare formations whet the scientific appetite of the speleologist long after the thrills of first discovery have waned. The problems of getting in and out, of surviving underground, are half the fun at first. But they can become more nuisance than challenge.

Wild caves are not welcoming. Even finding them may be a major project. Running a skirmish line through promising terrain is one method of locating cave openings. But even if there aren't enough people on the team to make this feasible, there are still two good surface clues to watch for.

1) *Outcroppings* of limestone or marble that have been oddly eroded. Since these formations were created in the same way as the caves themselves—by underground water erosion and corrosion—they have a carven, alien look, totally unlike other surface rock. They may appear to have been sculpted of heavy plastic with an enormous spatula. Though rough to the touch, they are oddly smooth in outline like piled, melted lumps of grey stone poking through the red clay soil.

2) *Sinks*: These are relatively small, shallow depressions in the earth. Any trees growing near such sinks will lean inward as if the ground were being sucked out from under them. It is. The California Buckeye tree is often associated with caves. It grows rapidly and seeks the moisture trapped in sinks and faults.

Scrambling through the inhospitable country near the caves, the scouting spelunker has a number of natural obstacles to contend with. First on the list is poison oak. Some people are not affected by it. Some are so allergic to it that any contact can make them dangerously ill. The most typical response is a small, localized skin rash which itches and burns simultaneously. Ice cubes applied topically are a good remedy. Washing the affected area in hot water should be avoided, as this may spread the toxin. Poison oak often grows in brushy stands. It can cover a complete hillside either as a tangly system of runners in shaded, moist areas, or as individual bushes resembling buck brush on dry, sunny exposures. This obnoxious plant may also sprout near the base of any sort of tree and grow into a sturdy vine whose leaves mingle with the host's overhead. It climbs rocks, too. It may make a frilly wreath around a wild cave's entrance. In late summer and fall poison oak may turn yellow, gold or red and can be literally beautiful. It also produces berries. It should be treated with caution and respect. People who assume immunity to its poison may learn too late that allergies can change. A person who was unaffected by it some years before will suddenly have a massive reaction, especially if exposed to its smoke when it's burned.

The animal world also contributes its guards for the wild caves. Although almost no animals live deep underground, many species find cave entrances to be convenient homes or hiding places. Porcupines, skunks, foxes, even coyotes and bobcats may be temporary residents. Caves near hilltops may host hawks. But all of these prefer escape to confrontation. Good judgment and a little patience on the part of the explorer is all that's necessary to avoid problems.

Snakes are common in the rocky, grassy areas around the caves. All are harmless and can be safely ignored except for the rattlers. Even these will get out of the spelunker's way if given a chance. Making noise is the best way to clear the area of its wild residents.

Some caves serve as daytime hideaways for bats. If disturbed, they may fly outside, squeaking. They do not attack people; they eat flying insects. In spite of their Halloween reputation, they are quite shy, gentle creatures. (There are no vampire bats in northern California.) Bat guano is no more poisonous than

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bird lime. Bats are less likely to have rabies than mice are. Rabid mice are too rare to be of serious concern to cavers.

Novice explorers may imagine a host of snarling predators standing between them and that never-before-seen cave. But if there is one thing that should *not* be included as a part of a spelunker's field equipment, it is a gun of any sort. Crawling around in the dark, the explorer runs a very real risk of accidently shooting himself or his companions.

There are a few extras, however, that *will* come in handy. A pair of leather gloves, for instance. Rock is rough on skin. Most cave exploring is done on hands and knees, at best. Frequently, the spelunker wiggles forward on his belly. Therefore, clothing should also be sturdy, but not bulky. Knee pads are helpful. The floor of a cave is usually lined with natural litter near the entrance: twigs and leaves and small, loose stones, washed in by winter rain or carried in by small animals as nesting material. None of it is soft. Farther into the cave, there will be only solid stone, coated with dry grit or slimy mud.

Mud is one of the true hazards confronting the explorer. The red clay soil, typical of the entire wild caves region, is as slippery as butter and can coat the sole of a hiking boot or a tennis shoe in a single stride. It can grease gloves or bare hands equally well. Anyone who has climbed rocks above ground knows what happens when your toe-hold slips or your grip gives way. The only difference underground is that you're falling in the dark. And if your flashlight breaks . . . hello, Hodag!

Summer spelunkers have little or no mud to contend with. But they face another possible danger: trapped carbon dioxide gas. Particularly at the end of a very long dry season, C02 gas may collect since there is no water to leech it out. The caver who blunders into one of these pockets will begin to gasp and pant for breath. There is usually time to retreat before the situation becomes serious. But the explorer needs to be aware of what is happening. If he passes out from lack of oxygen, his companions may have difficulty getting him out to good air again in time!

California is earthquake country. We are all well aware of it. Yet the spelunker may "ride out the Big One" in a wild cave and never even know it. Although quakes displace earth and solid rock on the surface, temblors pass through the underground in the way storm waves sweep the underwater world of the ocean: on the surface there may be wild tossing and breakage and disorder; underneath there is a powerful but silky movement of the shock wave passing through . . . without displacement, virtually without effect.

The fastest-growing stalactites depending from a cave's ceiling may grow about an inch every four hundred years. At that rate, a solid column, connecting floor and ceiling of a five foot high cavern would take twenty-four thousand years to form. There have been quite a number of "Big Ones" in that amount of time, and yet the growing deposits continue, undisturbed.

It is true that the columns do occasionally snap. There is one such column in Mercer's Cavern of Murphys, California. But these columns are not roof supports. Wild caves are incredibly stable. Man-made holes, such as gold and silver mines, are a different matter altogether. They *are* affected by quakes, often with tragic results. But even so, they may be safer than the surface. After the Great Quake of 1906, miners coming up from a deep shaft in Angels Camp had to be *told* there had been a temblor. They hadn't felt it underground.

Another of the cave explorer's nightmares is getting stuck. It's one of the reasons no one should enter a cave alone. There was a case reported in the Stanislaus region of two speleologists who carelessly separated inside a cave to pursue their individual investigations. One man became stuck in the loose rubble he was digging. Hearing his call for help, his partner tried to extricate himself from *his* niche, only to find

that he was stuck, too! What do you do when you're stuck? Keep calm. And keep wiggling. Eventually, one of them wiggled free and was able to rescue the other.

Ralph Squire wasn't stuck. But he stayed where he was, waiting. The darkness around him was absolute. . . . Except for the sickly green patches floating toward him out of the inky void. They congealed as he watched, acquiring forms as fantastic as they were grotesque. He knew they were only tricks his blinded eyes played on him. Yet with each passing moment, they grew more real and more fearsome.

Caving is not for everybody. But the true spelunker is as enthusiastic about his pursuit of knowledge and adventure as the mountain climber who starts up Everest "because it's there". However, many caves are also accessible to the casual visitor. And unfortunately, some people are

Another of the cave explorer's nightmares is getting stuck. It's one of the reasons no one should enter a cave alone.

cheap-thrill seekers. They would do better to explore a city subway where their vandalism and graffiti will not deface formations which took 24,000 years to grow.

Due largely to the efforts of the local branch of the National Speleological Society, California state law now considers such vandalism a crime, including the defacing or removal of any natural formation in a wild cave. The NSS encourages all explorers to respect as well as enjoy the caves, to leave them exactly as they found them; to help preserve these natural wonders for another 24,000 years, at least.

Squire's spelunking partner found him within an hour, sitting patiently where his flashlight had gone out. "What are you doing down here in the dark, Ralph?"

"Good of you to ask," said Squire. "I'm on a Hodag hunt."

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MISSING AND PRESUMED DEAD

By Steve Boga and Sandie Pramann

First Lieutenant David A. Steeves glanced skyward as he eased his muscular six-foot frame into the cramped cockpit of the T-33 jet trainer. The sky over Oakland's Municipal Airport was ashen grey, bearing witness to the heavy rain which had battered the Bay Area an hour earlier. As quickly as it had come, the torrential spring rain moved inland toward the High Sierra where it would turn to freezing snow.

Lt. Steeves taxied his T-33 jet onto the runway and waited for clearance. His flight plan called for him to fly southeasterly from Oakland over California's Central Valley. At Wheeler Ridge, between Bakersfield and Los Angeles, he would turn east toward Luke Air Force base in Arizona, the first stop on his flight to his home base in Alabama.

Steeves' thoughts were interrupted by a crackling voice over the radio. It was 10:43 a.m., May 9, 1957, and he was cleared for takeoff. Within seconds, the sleek jet was airborne, its gleaming aluminum quickly blending into the steel-grey morning sky.

Flying on instruments, Steeves climbed to an altitude of 33,500 feet. Oakland radar tracked the jet flying east toward Yosemite instead of the southeasterly heading called for in the pilot's flight plan. At 11:20 a.m., Steeves radioed his position as being over Fresno. Fresno Control made repeated attempts to establish contact with Steeves in order to ascertain his ETA at Wheeler Ridge. Their calls were answered only by the static of the radio.

At 11:40 a.m., the U.S. Air Force Rescue Squadron was advised that a T-33 jet and its pilot, 23-year-old David Arthur Steeves, were missing.

The Air Force immediately initiated a search but heavy cloud cover made it impossible to accomplish anything from the air. Ground crews also had problems, encountering fog, rain and snow above 4,000 feet which, at times, limited their visibility to just 25 feet. Two weeks after Steeves' disappearance, on May 23, 1957, the search was called off. It was presumed that Lt. Steeves lay dead in the wreckage of his aircraft somewhere in the mountains of California.

Steeves was three minutes south of Fresno, with an air speed of 425 mph when it happened. A dull thud? An explosion? He would never know for sure. He was knocked unconscious. When he came to his senses, the cockpit was filled with acrid black smoke. Instinctively, he pulled back on the stick, but nothing happened.

He flicked the canopy ejection switch, and the canopy blew off the jet. Raising the right-hand armrest, he squeezed a trigger, which blew Steeves and his seat out of the plane, sending him into a mad somersault, his head passing dangerously close to the jet's vertical stabilizer. Steeves pulled the release on the aircraft seat and kicked free of it, then pulled hard on the D-ring of his parachute. An immediate pop jolted his body so violently it took his breath away.

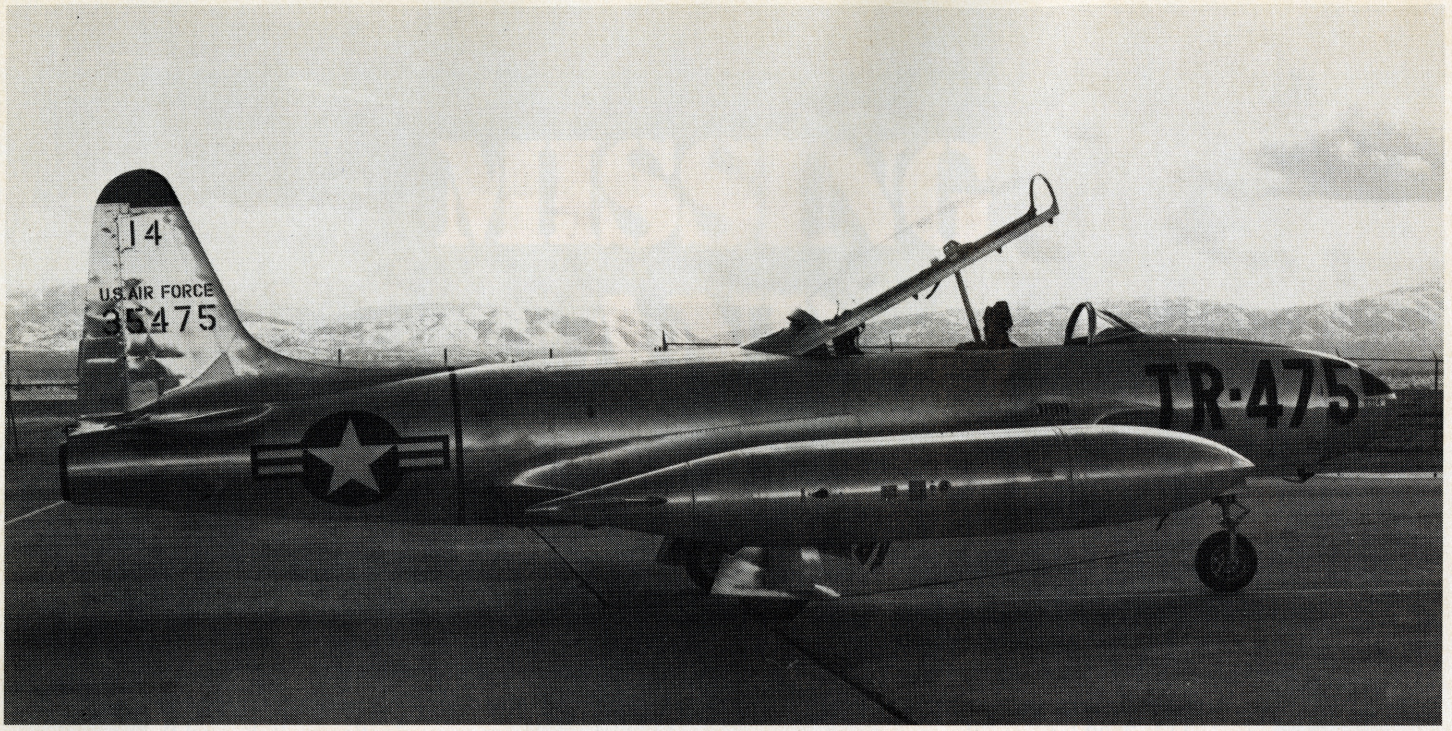
He drifted through the clouds, then dropped below them. Beneath him was the snow-clad High Sierra; "but what area?" he wondered. It was snowing and he was miles off course, dropping into a remote Sierra wilderness. It continued to snow for the next 15 days.

Steeves hit hard onto a bare, windswept rock projecting from the side of a peak, breaking both ankles. He lost his balance, spun around and smashed against the side of the mountain, which knocked the wind out of him. He slumped into a ball and lay there, his soft moans lost to the wind.

Managing an awkward crawl, Steeves eventually made it down to a saddle, where he found some dwarf pine trees. One had fallen and wedged itself against the other. Kneeling, he dug down in the snow until he had hollowed out a small cave beneath the log. He spread the parachute over it, threw in the seat cushion, and gingerly climbed in.

It was growing dark and he knew he'd have to start a fire if he was going to live through the night. He hacked at the rotten log with his knife; and using scraps of his flight clearance papers, he succeeded in starting

Our thanks to the following people for their assistance and continued support in solving the mystery surrounding the crash of the T-33A jet:
Clarence "Ozzie" Osborne for bringing this story to our attention and for his dedication over the past 30 years in trying to solve the mystery.
William D. Dooley for diving in freezing lakes and hiking 50 miles in a day and a half to check out leads.
David Sonke and Mark Allison for their dynamic flying & photography during their searches.
Mike Martel for his enthusiasm.



Lt. Steeves left Oakland's municipal airport in his T-33 jet trainer on May 9, 1957. The jet has never been found.

a small fire in the stump. He wrapped himself in the parachute and lay there in a winter cocoon, his feet against the smoldering stump, burning at one end, freezing at the other. He began, for the first time, to consider his own death. He knew he had done what he could, but he also knew it wasn't enough. With the low cloud cover, he doubted that anyone would find him. He expected to die, and for the first time considered using his revolver to end his suffering.

In all, Steeves spent three torturous nights in his prison of ice. In addition to his helmet, cap, oxygen mask and gloves, he wore wool socks and calf-length boots. Over his T-shirt and shorts, he wore a summer flying suit and jacket. It wasn't nearly enough; he was bitterly cold. Though ordinarily an outward-looking man, deprivation drove him inside himself. He began to analyze the life he had been living.

David Steeves' life was certainly in turmoil on that stormy Thursday morning in May, 1957. A strikingly handsome man, Steeves had a self-assured demeanor bordering on arrogance, that was perceived by some as a lack of respect for authority. He was critical of military inefficiencies, and that had earned him a reputation as a "troublemaker." That tag followed him to Craig Air Force Base near Selma, Alabama, where Steeves was transferred just before Christmas, 1956.

At Craig, Steeves served as a T-33 flight instructor. On a training flight in March, 1957, a student officially questioned Steeves' flying judgment. Though it was the student's word against Steeves', the student, a captain, outranked him, and Steeves was relieved of duty and reassigned as adjutant of a maintenance squadron.

Steeves was having marital problems, also. He had become involved with a San Francisco woman on one of his many flights to the West Coast. His wife, Rita, learned of the affair and they had fought over it. Unbeknownst to Steeves, she was planning to take their baby daughter and leave him.

At first light of dawn on the third morning, David Steeves considered his position, which was far from enviable. The sky was still overcast, with light snow falling. He hadn't seen or heard an aircraft in three days. He decided he had to get out of there—to find food and shelter—or die. Struggling to his feet, he discovered he could stand without too much pain. Leaving his bulky parachute behind, he set off in the only direction possible—down. The snow was five feet deep with drifts three times that, and progress was terribly slow.

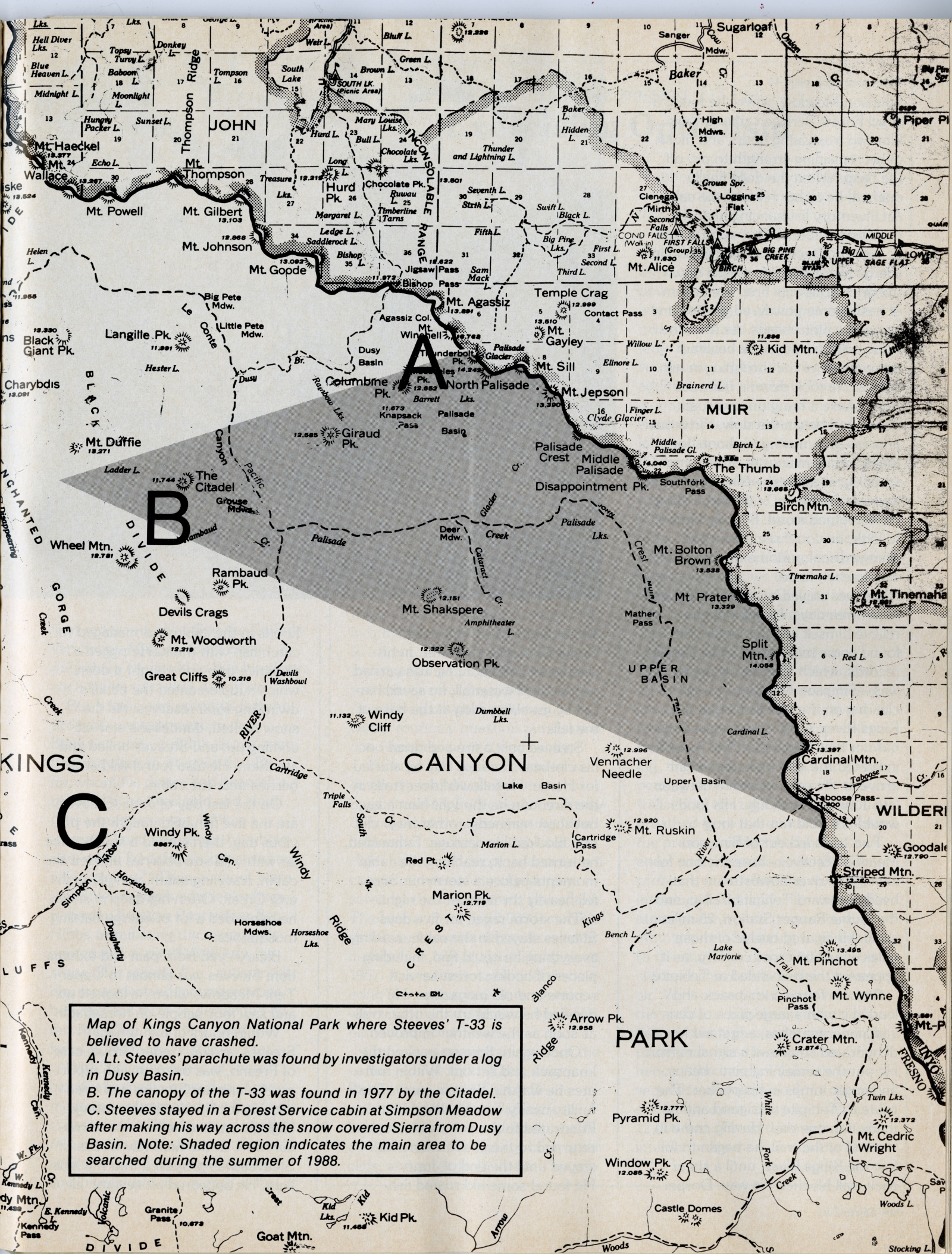
He stumbled and crawled about a mile a day for the next five days. At night, in a futile attempt to stay warm, he dug a hole beneath a rock or bush and crawled into it. Late on the sixth day, Steeves reached the timberline. For the first time he was able to build a fire.

On the following day, Steeves saw the first evidence of civilization. Somewhere near the Middle Fork of the Kings River, he came upon a sign that read, "Le Conte Drift Fence." He continued on, stumbling through the snow, his ankles screaming in pain. Later that day, he saw directional signs to "Grouse Meadow" and "Deer Meadow." He went towards Grouse Meadow. The snow was now mixed with rain and he was soaked. He had not eaten in seven days. He felt like a skeleton nailed to a cross of ice.

Steeves reached Grouse Meadow at nightfall and built a fire. Along the way he had seen a sign: "Simpson Meadow: 10 Miles." That gave him hope that he would soon reach help.

Two days later, Steeves arrived at

Continued on page 46



Map of Kings Canyon National Park where Steeves' T-33 is believed to have crashed.
A. Lt. Steeves' parachute was found by investigators under a log in Dusy Basin.
B. The canopy of the T-33 was found in 1977 by the Citadel.
C. Steeves stayed in a Forest Service cabin at Simpson Meadow after making his way across the snow covered Sierra from Dusy Basin. Note: Shaded region indicates the main area to be searched during the summer of 1988.

Continued from page 44

Simpson Meadow, where he found a small Forest Service cabin. It took him two frustrating hours and most of his remaining strength to pry off the hasp. When the door finally opened, he all but fell into the cabin. An inventory list hanging near the door listed "foodstuffs." After a frantic search, Steeves found the food in a large metal box. He wolfed down the dried soup mix first, then a can of hash, some powdered gelatin, and some raw pinto beans. As the ache in his belly subsided, he became more aware of the throbbing in his ankles. He took down a mattress from where it hung on a wall, sat down, and began the slow, torturous process of removing his boots for the first time in a week. Free of constraints, his ankles swelled. The pain was instantaneous and excruciating. He screamed aloud. Forcing himself to look, he could see a blue and orange discoloration extending halfway to each knee. . .

Steeves stayed in the cabin for the next three days. He left only to relieve himself and get water. He found some maps and Forest Service records, which told him where he was—Simpson Meadow, a small clearing on the middle fork of the Kings River, 6,000 feet in elevation—but not how to get out. The records indicated the first trail crew might arrive at the cabin anytime between late June and mid-July. His food would not hold out that long.

Two trails led out of Simpson Meadow. Steeves chose the one following the river downstream that headed toward Tehipite Valley, and the Hume Ranger Station, 25 miles away. He figured twelve of those miles would be cross country, as it appeared the trail ended at Tehipite.

Steeves found a knapsack and loaded it with a large piece of canvas, paper matches, a first-aid kit, dehydrated soup and a signal mirror. He put the remaining pinto beans and sugar lumps in his pocket. The route to Tehipite was good and he made it in one day. Having come to the end of the trail, he began to follow the Kings River, until a sheer rock wall blocked his way. Desperate to go on, he stripped and plunged into the icy water. In his weakened condition, he was carried over a small waterfall; he saved himself by grabbing a log at the base of the falls.

Steeves built a fire and dried out his clothes. The next day he started for Hume. He followed deer trails in the direction he thought Hume lay, but soon reached another huge cliff that blocked his passage. Exhausted, he turned back, reaching the cabin moments before a storm hit. Snow fell heavily throughout the night.

The storm raged for five days. Steeves stayed in the cabin, reading everything he could find, including pieces of books, forest service reports and old magazines. He decided he would try the other trail as soon as the weather improved.

Once again, Steeves packed the knapsack and set out. Within minutes he was hip-deep in snow. The futility nearly overwhelmed him. Frustrated to the point of tears, he returned to the cabin, where he stayed until the end of June. He found some old rusted fishhooks in the cabin and managed to catch fish with them. He rigged a primitive trap and caught a deer, which supplemented the cabin's dwindling food reserves. As the snow melted, dandelions started coming up, and Steeves boiled and ate them. He also found wild strawberries near the cabin.

On the last day of June, Steeves ate the five fish he'd caught the previous day, then stuffed a small coffee jar with wild strawberries and left the cabin, traveling south along Dougherty Creek. Often hip-deep in snow, he expended a lot of energy battling mosquitoes.

Bleary-eyed from pain and exhaustion, Steeves was almost to Upper Tent Meadows when he looked up and saw four people on horseback.

Within hours of Lieutenant Steeves' arrival, Cedar Grove, east of Fresno, was overrun with reporters. Lieutenant Steeves had been missing for 54 days in the snowy High Sierra and he had somehow survived. In the next few weeks, Steeves was propelled into the limelight. He appeared on several televi-

Valley of ghosts, taken from Dusy Basin.

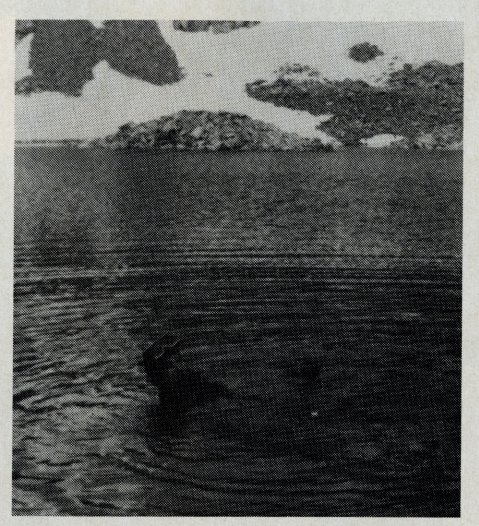
sion programs, including the Ed Sullivan Show. Magazine and book publishers clamored to buy his story, each trying to outbid the other.

But if fame and potential fortune brought any happiness to the Steeves family, it didn't last. It soon became clear to Steeves that Rita, for whom his desire had become a physical ache, was cold and aloof. (She would later say, "When I learned David was alive, the whole new world I'd carefully constructed fell to pieces.") Then, without warning, Steeves received a letter from Saturday Evening Post editor Ben Hibbs terminating the magazine's agreement to pay $10,000 for his story. The reason: ". . . substantial discrepancies and inconsistencies between the facts as developed by our Mr. Clay Blair Jr. . . and the facts as originally related by you. . ."

With a shark's sense of spilled blood, the media moved in. *Time* magazine enumerated the Post's discrepancies as "His boots seemed in remarkably good shape. . . Steeves at first showed no knowledge of a small forest fire discovered in the

The search for the missing T-33 jet. . .

Exercising Optimism



by William D. Dooley

Hiking twenty-plus miles per day along the Muir Trail is not an unheard-of feat. Lugging a full set of SCUBA gear to the beach is fairly commonplace, also. We have discovered, however, that backpacking a full set of SCUBA gear twenty miles into the Muir wilderness area seems to attract attention. Other hikers, upon spotting our load (how could you miss a small haystack creeping relentlessly down the the trail), would routinely question our destination, motives, project and sanity.

These are all topics the three in our party had discussed on numerous occasions. Particularly the sanity of packing diving gear into the Muir wilderness area in order to scale a cliff which would allow us access to a couple of miles of steeply sloping scree, at the top of which was a lake. The lake is close to 12,000 feet in elevation and purportedly concealed in its depths a military jet missing since 1957. It was the possibility of discovering this untouched plane wreck which motivated our small band of demented adventurers.

Our line of travel took us from the parking lot at South Lake, over Bishop Pass, down Dusey Basin, north along the Muir Trail to just below Helen Lake, and finally south up 2,000 feet of broken granite, small cliffs, and scree to the lake. This trip is approximately twenty miles and was accomplished in one l-o-o-o-o-ng day.

The next sunrise found us searching the shoreline for debris or other signs of the plane having crashed down in the area. The lake is located in a small cirque about one-fourth mile across and three-eighths mile long. A ridge running along the southwest edge of the cirque rose an additional 500 plus feet. This caused a good portion of the lake to be shaded. The southwest edge of the lake had snowpack extending from the base of the cliff to the ice which continued into the lake approximately thirty feet. The snow hampered our ground search slightly, but after a couple of hours of boulder-hopping, crater-crawling, and general beach combing, we found nothing identifiable with a jet. Well, this could only mean the plane, in its entirety, was in the lake.

Diving with compressed air at 12,000 feet, because of the rarified atmosphere, requires research and extreme caution in order to avoid what divers fear as "decompression sickness," or "the bends." While diving, the pressure of the water above, bearing down on the diver, is neutralized by the high pressure air breathed from the tanks. This allows the pressure inside the body to be equal to the pressure outside. The problems arise when the diver is introduced suddenly into a rarified atmosphere from a pressurized atmosphere. (Surfacing from depth to thin air.) The diver's body tissue still contains dissolved high pressure air. With no external air to restrict it, the air forms bubbles in the diver's tissues causing extreme pain, which usually doubles the diver over, hence, "the bends." This whole sequence of events could be demonstrated by opening a pop bottle at 12,000 feet. The sudden release of internal pressure causes most of the

Continued on page 58

First Lt. David Steeves talks with U.S. Air Force officers following his rescue from his 54-day ordeal in the snowy Sierra.

area where he said he camped, but later said he started the fire."

Regarding the boots, Steeves replied, "They're available for anyone to see. . . . for Clay Blair to say they show too little wear must mean he's an expert on such matters. It's hard to argue with a self-appointed expert." As for the fire, he again admitted he had started it; he had denied it before, he said, because he was frightened and ashamed.

But doubt has a momentum of its own. When *Life* magazine picked up the Steeves story, the questions they raised fueled the public's growing suspicions, creating still more questions: Why trap deer in Simpson Meadow when they are tame there? Why leave behind a parachute that could provide warmth? Could a man live 15 days without food? Why was a book of matches found at the Dusy Basin shelter? Why was the tree near the shelter charred a foot above the ground when the snow in early May was six feet deep? How did Steeves, on $6,000 a year, afford a Jaguar? Why had he not followed his flight plan? And, most importantly, what had happened to the T-33 jet?

When it was announced that Rita was seeking a divorce, Steeves felt himself surrounded by people who doubted his story. While no one publicly questioned his bailout over the Sierra, his 54 days alone or his survival of the experience, it seemed to him that everyone was looking for discrepancies in his story. In addition, theories were offered to explain how and why Steeves might have deliberately subjected himself to the life-or-death ordeal. There were rumors that Steeves had flown the jet to Mexico and sold it, then returned to the Sierra with his phony survival story—all to regain his wife's affections.

In response to questions about the "tame deer," Steeves offered his own question: "Do deer who haven't seen a human in ten months remain tame?" And to questions about the tree charred a foot from the ground, he said, "How does *Life* (Magazine) know the depth of the snow at Dusy Basin in early May? Did they have a reporter there? And even if it were that deep—and it could have been—haven't they heard of drifts? The rock I landed on was swept clean of snow." To the nagging question "Where is the jet?" he could provide no answer.

Over the next few weeks the Office of Special Investigation conducted a study of the incident. Shortly thereafter, Steeves voluntarily left the Air Force. The OSI report was never made public.

On October 18, 1965, David Steeves made the headlines again when he was killed in the crash of a small civilian aircraft near Boise, Idaho. Twelve years later, in 1977, a group of Boy Scouts hiking near Citadel in the High Sierra found a jet canopy. The canopy was identified as belonging to the T-33. No other trace of the aircraft has ever been found.

Even in 1988 the curtain is not down on this drama. There are still people today inexorably drawn to this mystery. They continue to be haunted by the questions: Did Steeves actually live and survive in the Sierra for 54 days? Did his aircraft actually explode as he claims? If so, what happened to the T-33?

A few of them still believe that one day the remains of Steeves' T-33 jet will be found in the High Sierra. One such person is Clarence "Ozzie" Osborne, a retired Air Force T-33 mechanic, who still has a thick file on the Steeves mystery. Osborne figures if the jet had crashed on a mountain or in a valley, someone in the past 30 years would have found it.

It's in a lake," he says.

With this in mind, William D. Dooley searched the lake that "Ozzie" felt would be most likely to contain the wreckage of Steeves' T-33. (See page 46) Finding nothing, the search has now been concentrated west of the Palisades above Big Pine, California.

Aerial surveys conducted in September 1987 suggested some evidence of wreckage in this area and ground parties organized and led by William Dooley will search the area this summer.

Perhaps finding the wreckage of Steeves' T-33 will shed some light on what really happened on May 9, 1957 high over the Sierra.

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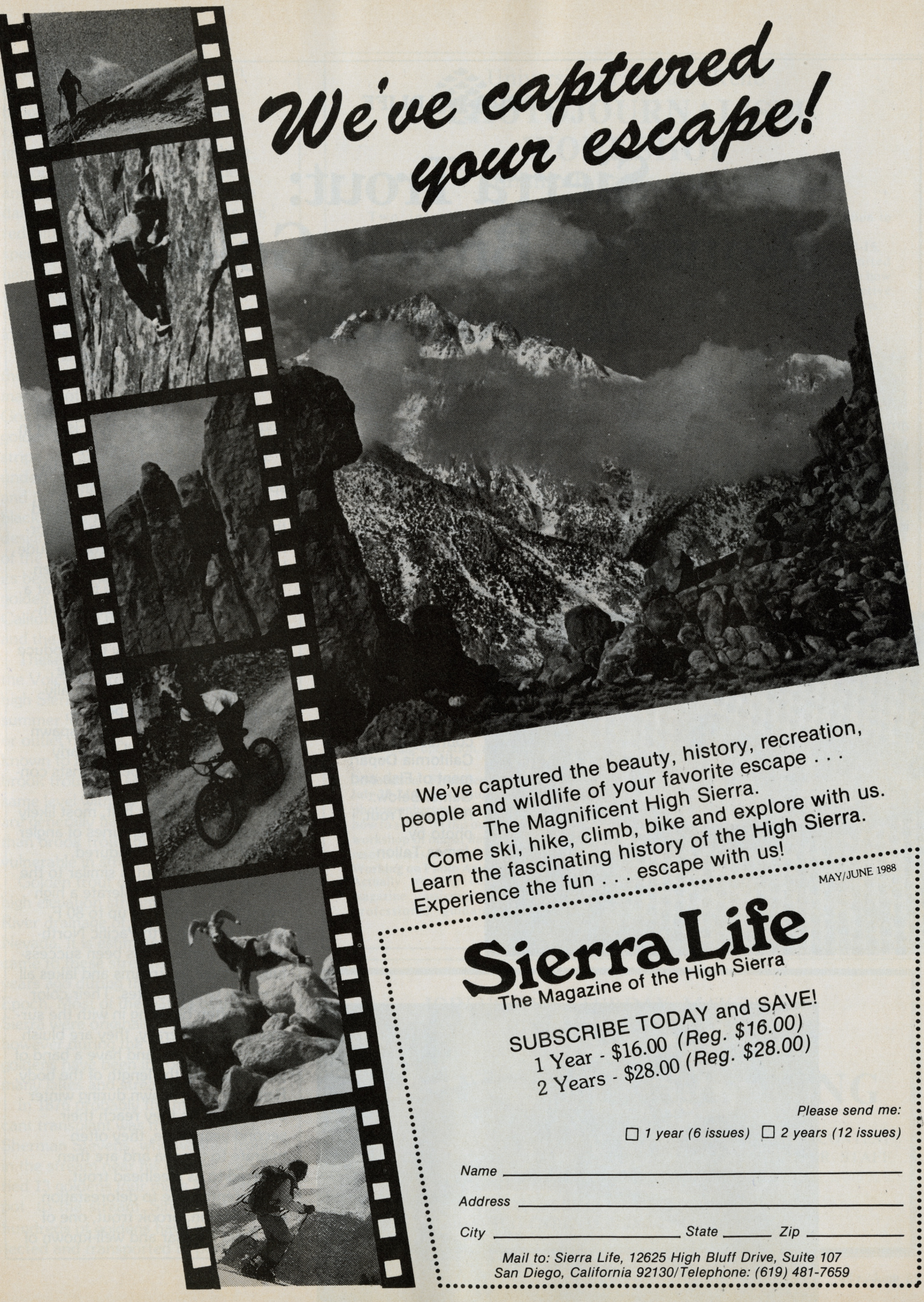

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Sierra Trout: Rainbow, Brown, Golden & Brookies

BY MELISSA YANK

Waders, long johns and parkas are among the essentials—along with fly rods, spinning rods and bait—that anglers tote for the opening of trout season (at 6 a.m. on the third Saturday in April), in order to battle the icy cold spring runoff.

Not only are the streams freezing, they're crowded! Every devoted fisherman in the state has staked out his own pool to work. And they're lined up elbow-to-elbow on both shores. It's almost as if they're throwing lines at each other, constantly getting tangled-up with the guy across the way.

Don't expect cooperation from your fellow fishermen, especially on opening day. Just because you've hooked a big one, that doesn't mean the person next to you won't snag your catch as it passes by. Fishing in these waters is an "adventure."

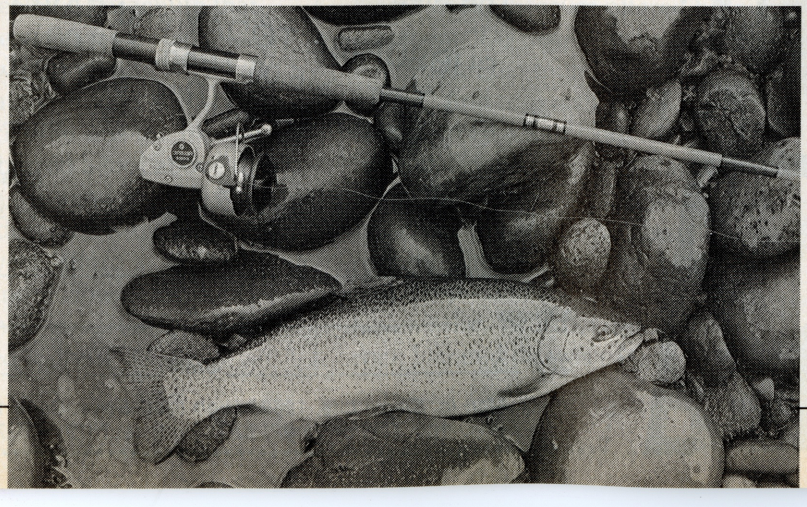
Trout, among the most popular sport fish, are known as fighters. Native or imported, they are found throughout the High Sierra. California's primary species of trout include brown, rainbow, brook and golden.

Because of their ability to live at a higher temperature than most others, the brown trout, native to Europe, have been easy to introduce all over the world, including the Americas. Browns, which usually weigh less than seven pounds, though some may be larger, spawn sometime between fall and early spring. Anglers and behaviorists consider browns to be the most discriminating about bait, most likely because of the 25 centuries of angler predation they have endured.

The rainbow trout is similar to the brown in that it can tolerate a high water temperature of up to 80°F. Native to the North Pacific Northwest, the rainbow has been successfully stocked in streams and lakes all over the United States. Their color varies, often blending in with the surroundings, generally, they are bluish with silvery sides, and have a band of pink spanning the length of the body. Rainbow trout spawn during winter and spring. As they reach their second year of life, they often migrate to the sea and are then referred to as steelhead trout.

Currently, due to deforestation and pollution, brook trout, one of the most popular and well-known of

Golden Trout, courtesy of California Department of Fish and Game. Below: Rainbow Trout, photo by James Tallon



all eastern fish, are diminishing in numbers as well as in range. The brook trout can live only in clear, cold water. Typically, they are greenish-brown in color, with blue-surrounded red dots on the sides and a pink belly. The dorsal fin has dark spots, and the pectoral fins are red with white tips. As with other species, though, color varies with habitat, and breeding habits vary with location. Some fish spawn upstream, while others prefer shallow lakes.

"This is the most beautiful of all the trouts," Barton Warren Evermann wrote in 1905 of the fish in Golden Trout Creek. They are golden with a broad pink longitudinal stripe and an even brighter red stripe underneath. The upper sides, dorsal and tail fins are scattered with small black spots. In 1947 the golden was designated the "State Fish" by an act of the Legislature, in recognition of its beauty. The two subspecies of golden trout presently recognized in California are the South Fork Kern and the Little Kern.

These western fish are native to the Volcano Creek of California's high Sierra. They spawn in early summer in streams or near the inlet or outlet of lakes. The golden is known to fight harder than the brook trout, but seems to be on the same level with the rainbow. They are generally harder to catch in lakes than brook trout, but may be quite vulnerable in streams.

Golden trout originated in several high elevation streams on the Kern River drainage of the southern Sierra Nevada. It is estimated that they came to these streams over 20,000— years ago during the Pleistocene Epoch. Most of the waters of the Sierra were originally without fish, however during the past 100 years, goldens have been introduced into many lakes and streams.

In 1876 probably the most significant transplant was made. Colonel Sherman Stevens, who wanted trout in the stream near his sawmill, carried 13 goldens four miles in a coffeepot to the stream. Since then, hundreds of goldens have been collected and transported to portions of

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Photo by Michael D. Cooke

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the Sierra. Today, goldens inhabit about 300 lakes and 700 miles of stream in California.

Once you've chosen trout as your game and have nabbed a spot to work, "matching the hatch," as fishermen call it, is next. This means presenting the trout with an artificial lure convincingly like the metamorphosing insects they have been feeding on. Finding the feed is vital in catching trout, according to Jerry McKinnis, host of the weekly outdoor fishing show, "The Fishin' Hole."

Trout are extremely finicky feeders. And word-of-mouth may be the best way to discover what they're feeding on if you're unfamiliar with an area. Asking at a local bait shop or dock just may do it. Another suggestion is to net bugs flying over the water, or stir up the gravel bed to see which bugs surface. Then try to match them with a fly from your tackle.

The best time of day to catch trout is when their hatch is active; trout do whatever the feed is doing. If it takes some hot sun to get the hatch growing, it might be one or two o'clock in the afternoon until a trout is caught.

A common mistake new fishermen make, according to McKinnis, is choosing the wrong weight of line. He suggests four- to two-pound test line. He also warns against wearing bright clothing when site-fishing. "Once you spook a trout," he said, "you might as well move on to the next fish. You're not gonna hook him."

A tip for smokers is to not touch the bait with your fingers. The fish will be repelled by the tobacco. Use surgical gloves or rub garlic on your fingers before handling bait.

Some fly fishermen think it's the tie of the fly that matters more than the size of the catch. It is believed that creating a handmade lure is a major part of the sport. They wouldn't even consider using natural bait. All reproduced flies are tied by hand. There has never been a trout fly satisfactorily duplicated by machine.

Imitation flies are made to resemble anything a trout might eat, including tiny salmon eggs, mice, and even blueberries. Of the three million trout flies tied each year in the United States, however, 90 percent are made to imitate insects, and resemble body parts such as the tail, wings, legs, head, and even sometimes eyes and antennae. A few of the 2,600 aquatic species native to North America are the gnat, dragonfly, mayfly, stonefly and caddis fly.

The task of supplying these dedicated fly fishermen with the desired exotic wares has become serious business. Capes or necks of Asian roosters are imported, the Indian jungle cock is farm-raised, and domestic fowl are bred extensively by United States sports manufacturers in order to provide feathers of proper color and stiffness. And although the pelts of the polar bear and some seals, and the feathers of the Malaysian birds of paradise are becoming more scarce because of protection they now receive, an enterprising fly-tier may still find these rarities in dust mops, fur coats and Las Vegas show girls' boas.

After all the time and trouble taken to imitate the size, color, texture and translucency of the insects' metamorphosal stages, in order to tie the perfect fly, you might ask yourself, "Does the trout really care?" This depends on the trout in question. Trout residing in remote, rarely-fished areas will often respond to a simple piece of white cloth tied to a hook, whereas trout in heavily-fished streams won't even acknowledge the presence of something so scant. This is because all of the non-selective feeders once found in these streams have already been removed—to the frying pan!

Regardless, no matter how meticulous and wary a fly-fisherman may be, no matter how compulsively he ties his insect replica, or the manner in which he casts it on the water, there is a trout out there, somewhere, worthy of his painstaking efforts.

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Nature's Course

by Steve Boga

In 1959, while hiking near Tenaya Lake in Yosemite, my Dad and I came upon a ghost forest of lodgepole pines with gummy blackened needles. The damage, my father explained, was wrought by the needle miner, a pinkish caterpillar, a quarter of an inch long and about as big around as a pencil lead. It seemed the larva of the little pest, which eventually becomes a greyish moth, eats — or rather mines — 3-5 needles each, giving the forest a burned-out look.

"Why don't they do something?" I cried in righteous indignation. "Why don't they spray the buggers out of existence?!"

Soon thereafter, the Park Service began to do just that. They dumped malathion on thousands of acres of forest land, killing some needle miners all right, but also wiping out about half of the resident bird population and most of the needle miner's natural enemies.

As a kid, I applauded the aggressive efforts of the Park Service. I had always had a real fondness for men like Jedediah Smith and John C. Fremont, men who were not afraid to "take the environment into their own hands." Like so many Americans in the Fifties, I had an Army-Corps-of-Engineer mentality regarding wilderness. I liked it well enough, it was pretty to look at, but it couldn't be allowed to stand in the way of progress. It was the sort of outlook that demeans whales to the status of oil storehouses for human use.

In the Sixties, I became more educated. On a backpacking trip I met an off-duty ranger, and one night around a campfire he replied to my inquiries: "The needle miner and the lodgepole are both natives of Yosemite. Each has been hanging out in the other's environment for thousands of years. Both are integral parts of a complex ecological relationship."

It was my introductory course in ecology, and the start of my brief career as a closet wilderness radical. I became an adherent to the militant philosophy of David Brower, the combination poet, naturalist and politician who was too far left for even the Sierra Club. Brower believes in letting nature have its way — all the

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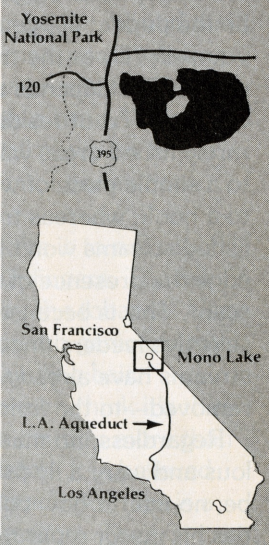

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way. With a blind eye toward diplomacy, he had once said, ". . . we should touch nothing more in the lower forty-eight. Whether it's an island, a river, a mountain wilderness — nothing more. What has been left alone until now should be left alone permanently." Face to face, as a native Californian, with the seemingly insatiable appetite of developers for farm land and wilderness, I found Brower's school of thought an attractive one in which to enroll.

Then, in the Eighties, I journeyed to New Zealand, where Man's intrusions into wilderness are far less palpable than here. I was guided onto the Franz Joseph Glacier by a handsome, spirited park ranger named Peter, who had been a guide and "Mountain Man" for 40 years. Intelligent, persuasive, with a genuine love of wilderness and good conversation, he suggested to me the second coming of John Muir. The big environmental issue at that time — and one on which Peter apparently had some influence — was whether or not tourist-loaded helicopters should be allowed onto Franz Joseph's sister glacier to the south. I was confident Peter would take the position that a technological intrusion — especially such an obstreperous one — was clearly unacceptable in a National Park. But he surprised me by saying that he planned to vote for the proposal, adding by way of explanation that "some people have no other way to see the glacier up close than by helicopter. Then, his face radiating his special brand of wisdom, he added, "I've spent my whole life working to protect this . . ." His hand swept out, describing the canyon that housed the incredible glacier. ". . . but, you know, people are important too."

So they are. That's why it's so difficult to obediently follow Brower disciples into battle. Still, as relentlessly destructive to wilderness as the forces of progress are, we desperately need Brower radicalism, if only as a bargaining chip for moderation. Because once nature loses the game, the season — and all seasons to follow — will be over, too. There will be no rematch.

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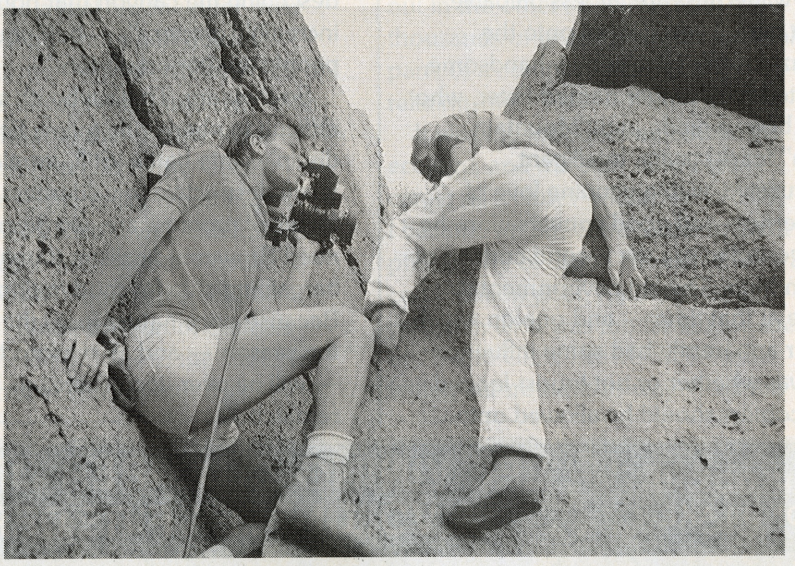
"Moving Over Stone"

the rock climbing video



by Kristen Jacobsen

A climbing trip around the Southwest, a master climber, a creative cameraman, rented equipment, a world beat, "Special Fun" soundtrack, and finances from a variety of intriguing sources. The project? "Moving Over Stone".

It began as an instructional video, rock climbing — the basics. But when the crew got on the road and encountered a dozen of the finest climbers in the world, things evolved. The instructional element remains strongly intact, but now the basics are blended with scenes of world class athletes taking the visualizing student clearly to the cutting edge of climbing.

"Moving Over Stone" is specifically about movement, the core of the art of climbing. The video conveys a sophisticated yet utterly simple attitude toward the relationship between mind and movement, climber and climb. The video respects our intelligence.

Michael Strassman, the video wizard, and Doug Robinson, veteran climber, instructor and guide, had often joked and dreamed of making a video of one of their favorite sports. Their talents and styles are very different; the collaboration created an exceptional tape.

There was nothing traditional about their approach. A stream of ideas guided the shoots, not a preconception of a final version. They began in their own backyard, the Buttermilk, outside of Bishop, California. And they responded to their unplanned rock star encounters by filming miles of frames.

And Rock Stars they got: world climbing champions Lynn Hill and Stephan Glowacz at Smith Rocks, Oregon; John Bachar and Peter Croft soloing in Yosemite; Bobbi Bensman and Dale Bard crack climbing in Canyonlands; Jerry Moffett, Todd Skinner; even a four year old kid, reminding us we all used to climb. . .

Michael and Doug meticulously paced the visuals and instruction to the viewer's ability to absorb information. We are encouraged to use this tape as a tool to pre-visualize future moves. "Use this tape, play it back and let the images get inside you, by-pass your brain". Avoid that mental voice that tells us no, you can't, it isn't possible, you aren't capable. Given a chance we all are capable of far more than our minds allow us to believe.

In fact something interesting happened to Michael and Doug in the midst of all that editing. Stiff and out

of shape, needing a break, they'd go out for some afternoon climbing, and climb amazingly well. It slowly dawned on them, the technique of imaging movement that their tape was emphasizing was working. Stronger than they had ever expected.

The video was shown to its first large audience in March, at the University of California Santa Cruz. After the credits scrolled amongst alpine-glow light and cool sax tunes, and the house lights came up, the room, overflowing with novice and expert climbers and curious friends, sat quietly still. One word broke the silence, "excellent".

Since that moment the reactions and support for the video have streamed in from many significantly different directions. One Western Mountaineering employee took the tape home, showed it to her grandparents. They loved it, and finally understand why their granddaughter is so enthralled with the sport. The head of UCSC's Recreation Department, a non-climber, was surprised how entertaining and informing it was. And the customers in WM who, while browsing through the store, end up mesmerized and watch the entire 58 minutes. That's alot to say for a video, especially an instructional one.

I've seen the tape a dozen times by now. My only criticism to the video is its density. I'm stuffed with concepts, images, and music. But every time I see it I see more. And then I remember Doug, the narrator, encouraging me to rewind and review.

Oh, let me warn you. Watching "Moving Over Stone" inspires you, encourages you, implants the seeds of adrenaline that make you want to climb. How your body responds to watching it will haunt you. You'll want to get out there. On the limestone, granite, volcanic, or sandstone rock. And move.

"Moving Over Stone" is available at both Western Mountaineering stores or can be ordered from:

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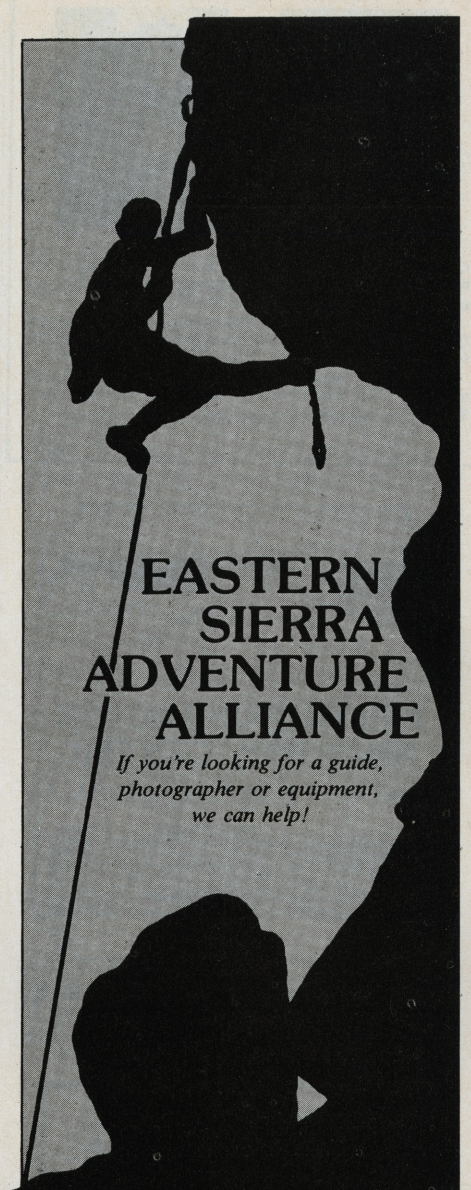

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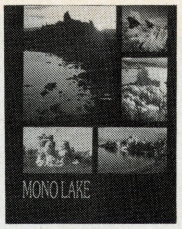

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OPTIMISM Continued from page 47

drink to bubble out into the rarified atmosphere. Since I didn't wish to bubble like a soda, I did my homework and ascertained the proper decompression stops and other vital information.

Swimming the circumference of the lake revealed beautifully clear water through which I could see completely across the lake. At first I thought there was a huge rock wall in the center of the lake until I realized I was looking at the far wall of the lake magnified and made to appear closer by the water's refracting ability. During the surface swim nothing was spotted which was identifiable as part of an airplane. This left only a small deep hole at the south end of the lake. This hole appeared to be about 70 feet deep. Dives were made deep enough into the hole to observe and photograph the bottom, but not deep enough to risk decompression problems.

The search of this lake, while entertaining, revealed no sign of the missing plane. In the deeper area of the lake were some large, smooth granite blocks which may have appeared from the air to be plane parts. These were photographed for Mr. "Ozzie" Osbourne of Sonora, California. "Ozzie" has been searching for this plane for a number of years and had flown over the lake on a prior search.

Searching for this plane, with its shroud of mystery, evidently produces a form of addiction. During the hike out we discussed future trips and possible theories on the location of the missing plane. After briefing the staff of *Sierra Life* on our unsuccessful search, we were told that they had just completed an aerial photographic survey and had spotted a small scrap of aluminum high in the Sierra. . . no doubt in a high inaccessible canyon where no one has been since 1957. Hmmm, well maybe just once more.

William D. Dooley is a decorated Vietnam War veteran, who has offered his assistance in searching for the T-33 jet.

SEARCH Continued from page 30

The formal search came to an end on August 18. In Glen Dawson's words, "It is like trying to find a needle in a haystack." He urged the senior Starr to let Clyde stay on.

Clyde did continue the search until August 25. He climbed to the summit of Michael's Minaret that day before descending along the northwest face. His dry, unpunctuated account follows: "After remaining on summit about half an hour sweeping the other Minarets with glasses began the descent, constantly scanning the northwest face. Arriving at the notch examined that face from there but saw nothing. Walked out a few yards along a ledge leading northwestward and looked up. Saw the body lying on a ledge about fifty yards distant across the head of the chute in a southwesterly direction and slightly higher than the notch."

"The grim, gaunt, lonely Minarets of Madera County, so beloved by Walter A. Starr, Jr., . . . are to be his tomb."

The Starr family decided to leave the body where it lay. A newspaper story said, "The grim, gaunt, lonely Minarets of Madera County, so beloved by Walter A. Starr, Jr., lawyer and mountain climber, are to be his tomb."

It remained for Francis Farquhar to write a fitting epitaph, used in the preface of some of the Starr guidebooks: "It is a grand company, those who have not come back. There are the Englishmen—Mummery, of Nanga Parbat, Mallory and Irvine, of Everest; and the Americans—Allen Carpe and Theodore Koven, of Mount McKinley, Newman Waffl, of Robson, and now, Pete Starr, of The Minarets. The young men of today know them, and the young men of tomorrow will not forget them. We all salute them!"

MUIR TRAIL Continued from page 15

of paradise. I think we should check it out."

"Now?!"

"You doing anything else?"

"Besides getting hypothermia? Actually, I had in mind a warm sleeping bag, a good book and a few dozen Graham Crackers."

"Do it another time."

And so we checked out the lake, which was as pristine as Jeff predicted. Even partially obscured by a gray curtain of rain, it was gorgeous. And deserted. We knew instinctively that we were the only ones for miles around. We set up our rods, Jeff tying on a gold Super Duper, me a silver one, then began circling the lake, casting and reeling in. It wasn't a big lake, even by Sierra standards, but it was deep with plenty of open granite and meadow areas suitable for casting.

"I've got one!" Jeff cried. We had been at it for about 10 minutes. A few seconds later, before I could even begin to feel sorry for myself: "I've got one too!"

That evening we built a campfire (the rain had stopped) and wrapped our six foot-long rainbows in tinfoil and laid them in the coals. When they were done I showed Jeff how to peel off the backbone with a fork. We agreed that they were the best-tasting fish we'd ever eaten. After dinner, we stoked up the fire, got out the topographical map and tried to figure out exactly where we were.

After awhile Jeff pointed to a tiny body of water that appeared to be little more than a pond. "That has to be it!" he exclaimed. "We've discovered an unnamed lake that's not even on a trail."

"It looks smaller on the map than it really is."

"That means nobody has any reason to come here unless they already know about it."

"Or, like us, they magically stumble upon it."

"Ah, that's what we'll call it," he cried, "Magic Lake."

"Good," I said. "I like it."

"I love it," he said.

1983: Jeff and I are camped at Magic Lake, for the fourth time in the last five years. It has turned out to be everything we hoped for, and more. It's at 9,000 feet but in kind of a pocket canyon which somehow traps the heat, because it's a lot warmer at night than, say, Tuolumne Meadows. The fishing is good, but not too good—just the way we like it. And the water! Right now, with the sun reflecting off its surface, it is a bed of jewels.

One of the many gifts bestowed upon us by the mountain gods is the water. It's not that great for practicing the butterfly stroke—being little warmer than snow melt—but after a tough, bone-jarring hike, there is nothing in this world quite like throwing off your backpack, hitting the dirt and drinking straight out of a cold stream or lake. But those days may be over, all because of a tiny invader.

...it was gorgeous. And deserted. We knew instinctively that we were the only ones for miles around.

It's called giardia, and this plague of paradise is an intestinal parasite that is systematically invading the lakes and streams of the nation's recreation areas. Jeff got it last year in the Rockies and it took weeks to get rid of it. He compared it to having your innards tied into a square knot.

This year, for the first time, the rangers gave us a pamphlet on giardia with our wilderness permit. They recommended we boil our water at least 5 minutes. That means carrying extra fuel, waiting for the water to cook, and drinking water that is the aesthetic equivalent of kissing one's sister.

1988: Earlier today, I was sitting on a patch of spongy meadow at the edge of Magic Lake on a near-windless 75-degree day, my back against a tree, at peace with the world. Karen was off somewhere and it was mountain quiet, a deep, resounding silence broken only by the lapping of water against rocks and the happy hum of insects. Suddenly I realized I had done nothing for perhaps an hour. I hadn't read a book, or written in my diary, or tried to catch a fish. My book, diary and rod all lay beside me, untouched. Such contented repose is quite alien to me in the city, where we all seem to be toiling frantically on the treadmill of life, yet here it seemed perfectly natural. I don't suppose I completely "quieted my mind" (in the true Zen meaning of the phrase), but I came pretty close. If I were a psychotherapist, I would prescribe a couple of weeks above 9,000 feet. That would straighten out most people's problems.

As I plod toward "middle age," I still have not hiked the John Muir Trail or caught a Golden Trout. So what? I have my whole life to achieve those goals and what better cause to devote one's life to? However, I do have what seems like an attainable goal vis-a-vis the John Muir Trail. Three friends and I have a pact to hike the entire route—in three separate installments. Starting next summer, we will hike about 70 miles on each two-week trip. That's an average of five miles a day, though I imagine a more likely pace would be ten miles on the odd days, rest on the even.

Even 70 miles—climbing over high-altitude passes on 40-year-old legs—will be a rigorous hike, and we plan to make plenty of concessions to age and technology. Instead of tube tents, we will carry state-of-the-art domed models; also high-tech sleeping pads and bags, and the latest in backpacking cookery. Still, we will do the walking ourselves—every step of it. That part never changes.

Splitting the hike into three segments, carrying fancy tents—it's a bit cushier than the trip my father envisioned. But who is he to say? Today he does most of his walking on the golf course, and it's not his dream anymore. It's mine. He gave it to me, and I plan to keep it as long as I can.

MOSQUITO Continued from page 15

on your skin — at which point the race becomes a showdown between the palm and the proboscis. Most often, the proboscis wins out, leaving you determined to fight fire with fire.

3. But don't try to smoke them out.

Legend has it that a good, smoky campfire — or even a cigarette — will drive all manner of insects away. Not the mosquito. According to Garcia, mosquitoes aren't attracted to smoke, but won't be driven very far by it, either. Garcia advocates a simpler remedy:

4. Clothes. Lots of clothes.

When mosquito activity peaks, you may be tempted to beat a quick retreat to your tent or camper. But clothes will work just as well, and will let you have a whole lot more fun. Most heavy nylon is mosquito-proof, as are loose-fitting, thick cottons. Keep your head, neck and vulnerable ears covered with hats and bandannas, and remember to bring gloves and thick socks. Although difficult in hot weather and while hiking, this technique is unbeatable during the cool hours of morning and late evening. In between, try to:

5. Use repellent when possible.

Repellent goes quickly, so bring a lot. One 4-oz. bottle per person per week should suffice. Several different chemical repellents are currently on the market. Most contain a chemical known as "DEET," in concentrations ranging from 45 to nearly 100 percent. The higher the concentration, the longer-lasting its effects. Mosquitoes may hover near repellant-covered skin, and may even alight, but won't stay long enough to bite.

Herbal lotions, Avon brand "Skin So Soft" lotion, consumption of brewer's yeast, and hand-held devices that emit a high-pitched noise have also been touted as repellents. In laboratory tests done in 1976, researchers in UC Berkeley's entomology department found no evidence supporting the effectiveness of the hand-held devices or the brewer's yeast. Avon lotion and herbal remedies have not yet been evaluated in a lab, but it has been theorized that they thwart the mosquito's sensing mechanisms by blocking the excretion of carbon dioxide or by slightly reducing the temperature of the skin.

6. Take advantage of rain, cold and spray.

There's nothing good about hiking in the rain, right? Wrong. Most mosquitoes prefer not to fly in heavy winds or rain, which can knock them down. Nor do they fly in severe cold, as low temperatures slow their metabolism down. During good weather, consider stopping for breaks near quickly moving water, where wind and spray deter the bugs.

Should all the above strategies fail, you can always:

7. Go with someone who is more attractive to mosquitoes.

For reasons currently unknown, mosquitoes seem to like some people better than others. Body temperature, skin color, personal odor or lack of it, and levels of lactic acid in the blood may all factor in. Should you find that you have high mosquito appeal, consider bringing a pig along on your trip. It is said in Italy that those who sleep with a pig in the room remain free of mosquito-born malaria. Some have theorized that the pig's higher body temperature makes it a more attractive target than a sleeping human.

But don't try the same trick with your dog. In parts of the Sierra, (El Dorado, Placer, Yuba, Plumas, Humboldt and Shasta counties) mosquitoes are thought to be responsible for transmitting canine heartworm to coyotes and dogs.

9. And last but not least, accentuate the positive.

While mosquitoes in the Sierra are merely annoying, in other parts of the world, they can be fatal: thousands die every year in Africa, India, Pakistan, Asia and Central America from such mosquito-born diseases as malaria, yellow fever and dengue.

If that comparison isn't enough to lighten your spirits when the bugs gets thick, try congratulating yourself that you're not hiking in the 1920's, when swarms were so heavy at 10,000 feet that they dimmed the sunlight and turned white horses black.

ALTITUDE Continued from page 89

season, measuring the blood oxygen levels of prospective climbers. "That's the essence of what we need to know to determine how well a climber has acclimatized, how well his lungs are working. If he tests low, I'll tell him he should stay down another few days."

Hackett can measure acclimatization all right, but he admits that there is no sure-fire way of predicting whether someone will make it to the top of the mountain. Extreme altitude causes physiological stress for everybody, but with varying degrees of intensity. It's ironic, then, that Hackett refers to altitude as the Great Equalizer. "What I mean by that," he explains, "is that someone who is not necessarily a great athlete at sea level may do very well at high altitudes. And vice versa."

Theoretically, Hackett says, everyone helicoptered from sea level to the top of Everest (29,028') would die within a couple of minutes. At 15,000 feet, 50% of the population would experience some form of mountain sickness. And at 9,000 feet, an altitude more relevant to the average Sierra hiker, 10 percent will suffer symptoms. But which 10%? Or more importantly, what can we do to assure that we be included in the blessed 90%?

At 15,000 feet, 50% of the population would experience some form of mountain sickness.

A good predictor of high-altitude health is what Hackett calls the 'hypoxic drive to breathe', which is basically how much you breathe in response to the air pressure—or lack thereof. It's a measurement that can be done in the lab: Hackett will make the subjects hypoxic (under-oxygenate their tissues) then see how much breathing that stimulates.

At higher altitudes, the amount of air going into the lungs has to increase to compensate for the diminished air pressure. What's important is not just the rate of breathing, but the depth too—the amount of oxygen penetrating those deep pulmonary capillaries.

"If we had pretested climbers for Himalayan expeditions, people like Reinhold Messner might have been left off the team."

An established correlation between success at high altitude and success in a laboratory test has inevitably led to the question of pretesting climbers for adaptation to altitude. Hackett is opposed to the idea. "If we had pretested climbers for Himalayan expeditions," he says, "people like Reinhold Messner might have been left off the team. There are better people in the lab than Messner, but nobody better on the mountain."

Which brings us back to the basic question: "How can we maximize our chances of preventing mountain sickness?"

"The best thing you can do," Hackett says, "is to have good parents."

After that, the keys to prevention and treatment are agreed upon:

1. Ascend gradually.
2. Make intermediate stops to allow the body to adjust and minor symptoms to pass.
3. Descend immediately upon first signs of symptoms.
4. Maintain a high-carbohydrate low-fat diet.
5. Drink lots of water.
6. Avoid alcohol.
7. Take prescribed medicine at the first sign of even moderate symptoms.

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EVOLUTION Continued from page 10

Muir was horrified by the damage the "hoofed locusts" wrought to the fragile landscape of Tuolumne Meadows. He wrote in his diary: "The harm these sheep do goes to the heart . . . . To let them trample so divinely fine a place seems barbarous."

The idea of a "crest-parallel" trail, one that ran north/south through the High Sierra, came to a 14-year-old boy named Theodore H. Solomons one day in 1884 while he was tending his uncle's cattle in an alfalfa field near Fresno.

In 1890 Yosemite National Park was established. As this was before the days of the National Park Service, the Secretary of the Interior asked the U.S. Cavalry to take charge.

In 1892 John Muir helped found the Sierra Club. He was elected president, a title he would hold for the rest of his life.

That same year, Theodore H. Solomons, now 22, arrived in Yosemite to begin exploring the main crest of the Sierra. For the next three months, he traveled an area bounded on the north by Tuolumne Meadows and on the south by the South Fork of the San Joaquin River.

In 1893 sheep were prohibited in the Great Sierra Forest Preserve, a 4,000,000-acre area—that included Yosemite—set aside by President Harrison to protect timber and watershed lands. Many of the herders, who had used the high mountain pastures for 20 summers, refused to recognize the government's title to the land. They resisted, but public opinion and the law were both against them and eventually they were driven out of the mountains.

In 1894 Solomons again went exploring. He continued south along the south fork of the San Joaquin, climbing and naming peaks around Evolution Valley, sketching and taking pictures on his new 4X5 plate camera. Though he ran low on food and suffered many hardships, he explored as far as the south fork of the Kings River.

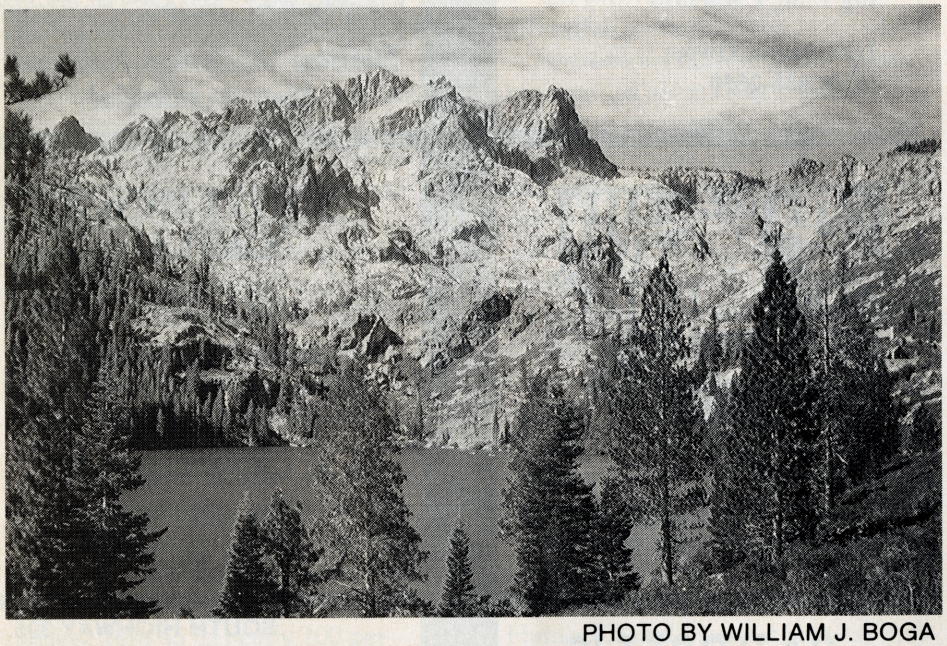

PHOTO BY WILLIAM J. BOGA

In 1895 a Sierra Club member, and a professor of fine arts at Stanford, named Bolton Coit Brown began to journey into the southern part of the range. In those days one approached the Kings River mountains from Fresno and it took Brown three days of hard walking with his pack animals just to begin. Making excellent sketches of the area by day, he kept himself warm at night by covering himself with pine and willow branches.

The first Sierra Club overnighter took place in 1901 when William Colby took 96 people to the high country east of Yosemite Valley for two weeks of hiking, camping and peak climbing.

The following year, John Muir took President Theodore Roosevelt camping in Yosemite and the two became great friends. It was Muir's influence with Roosevelt that so dramatically advanced the cause of conservation during his two terms in office. In the next eight years the number of national parks would double, and the acreage set aside in national forest reserves would nearly quadruple.

In 1908 Joseph N. LeConte, the last great trail blazer of the High Sierra, set off from Yosemite with two companions, each of them leading a mule carrying 175 pounds of provisions. Three hundred miles and 27 days later, they arrived at the Kings River Canyon. Except for Mather Pass, the Kings-Kern crossing and the trail up Mt. Whitney, they had covered roughly the route of today's John Muir Trail.

John Muir died on Christmas Eve, 1914, of exhaustion and a broken heart suffered in a losing battle with the government over the damning of Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley.

In 1915 a bill was passed by the California legislature appropriating the funds necessary for "the construction of a trail in the High Sierra region of California and connecting Yosemite National Park with Mt. Whitney and vicinity. The trail to be constructed with the moneys hereby appropriated shall be known as the 'John Muir Trail' in honor of the late John Muir who has performed an inestimable service in making known to the world the wonders of the mountains of California."

The trail was completed in 1938, 54 years after young Theodore Solomons had his vision in a Fresno alfalfa field. It required more than $50,000 in funds, as well as the support and effort of state engineers, government survey officials, Forest and Park Service personnel, Sierra Club members, U.S. Cavalrymen and lots of pick-wielding workers.

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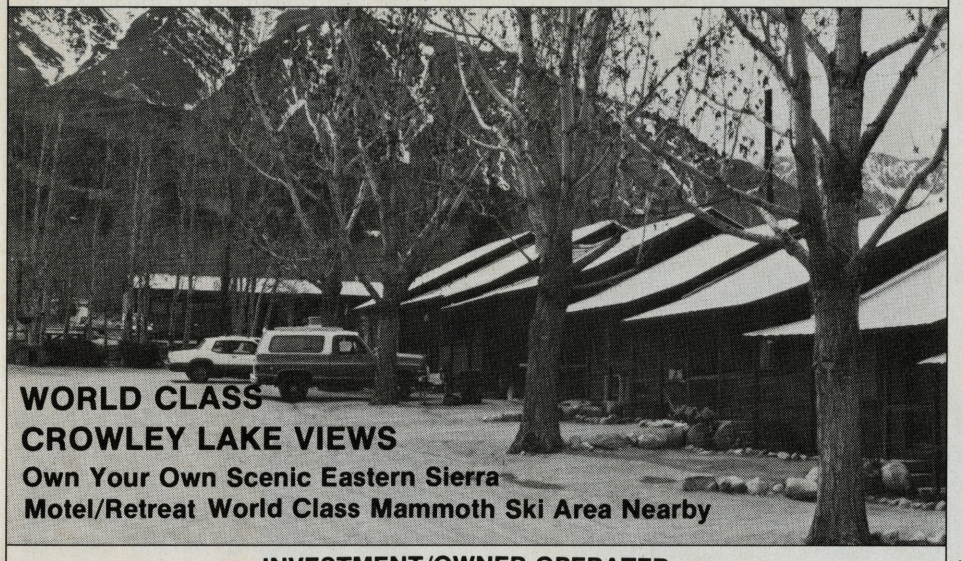

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John E. Svenson, Jr.

An Artist With Mountains in His Blood

By Marion Glenn

John E. Svenson, Jr. is not your run-of-the-mill landscape painter.

Like many artists before him, Svenson has sought inspiration in the mountains, and the vast expenses and craggy profiles of rugged mountain peaks have become the chief subjects of his works. As a mountaineer as well as an artist, however, he has come to see the mountain differently from most viewers. His unusual prints and paintings reflect a closeness with his subject — as well as a fine touch of whimsy.

"In art, as in climbing," he says, "the individual is not only seeking perfection in style, but probing beyond the boundaries of his immediate environs in a constant search for totally satisfying situations.

"I feel that — in both the climber's and the artist's worlds — we succumb to competition and to the stepping-stone process of development by doing the routes or painting the subjects that dictate proper advancement over given periods."

Coming from an artistic family, Svenson had the opportunity to observe and learn from such outstanding artists as sculptors Albert Stewart and Paul Manship and painters Yoshio Kanamori, Millard Sheets, Milford Zornes and Robert E. Wood.

The unique style of his work virtually defies description. R. Bruce Duncan, president of the Chicago Art Appraisers Association, writes, "His almost whimsical figures remind one of Lautrec, but they have a decided serious side as they come to grips with nature much like Daumier's satirical masterpieces. His use of flat space with mountains and wilderness causes Rockwell Kent to come to mind, yet he has left the main trail and developed his own form of artistic expression, particularly in experiments with color and texture."

Primarily a watercolorist, he has in recent years been experimenting, most successfully, with woodcuts — playing on the subtle grain of the wood to enhance the mood of the resulting prints. Of late, though, he has been returning more frequently to his original medium.

The life he has chosen to lead — Svenson makes his home in Haines, Alaska, where he is a member of the Alaska Guides Association and has the distinction of having climbed Mt. McKinley more often than any other artist in history — has influenced his choice of subjects and media. "Being a mountaineer is what has driven me to paint and print mountain events most people don't experience," he says. "To expose the groundlings to our wild and windy world has always been a challenge and the determining factor to my happiness at the drawing board or high on a ridge."

The way he captures the spirit of the mountains obviously speaks to his fellow mountaineers as well as to "groundlings." Svenson's works have appeared in many international major mountain-oriented magazines,

"To expose the groundlings to our wild and windy world has always been a challenge and the determining factor to my happiness at the drawing board or high on a ridge."

including *La Montagne*, *Climbing*, and the noted American publication, *Ascent*. The Alaska State Museum and North Carolina Museum of Natural History display his works and the American Alpine Club Museum in New York recently acquired a complete set of his graphic works and requested copies of all of his future prints. He is the first artist to be so honored.

Alaska's long winters — Svenson notes they run about two months behind the Sierra in the arrival of spring — provide plenty of indoor time for his art. Come summer, he will be away from home for months at a time, guiding on Denlai and other challenging climbs.

Represented by several galleries in the "lower States" as well in Alaska, Svenson harbors a particular fondness for the Sierra.

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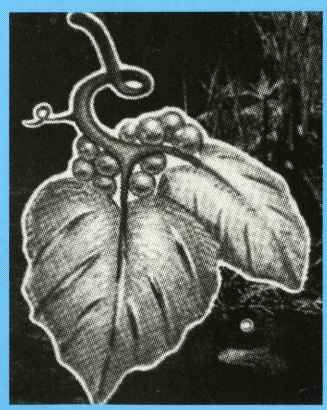

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SIERRA WILDFLOWERS

. . . magic carpet of the high country

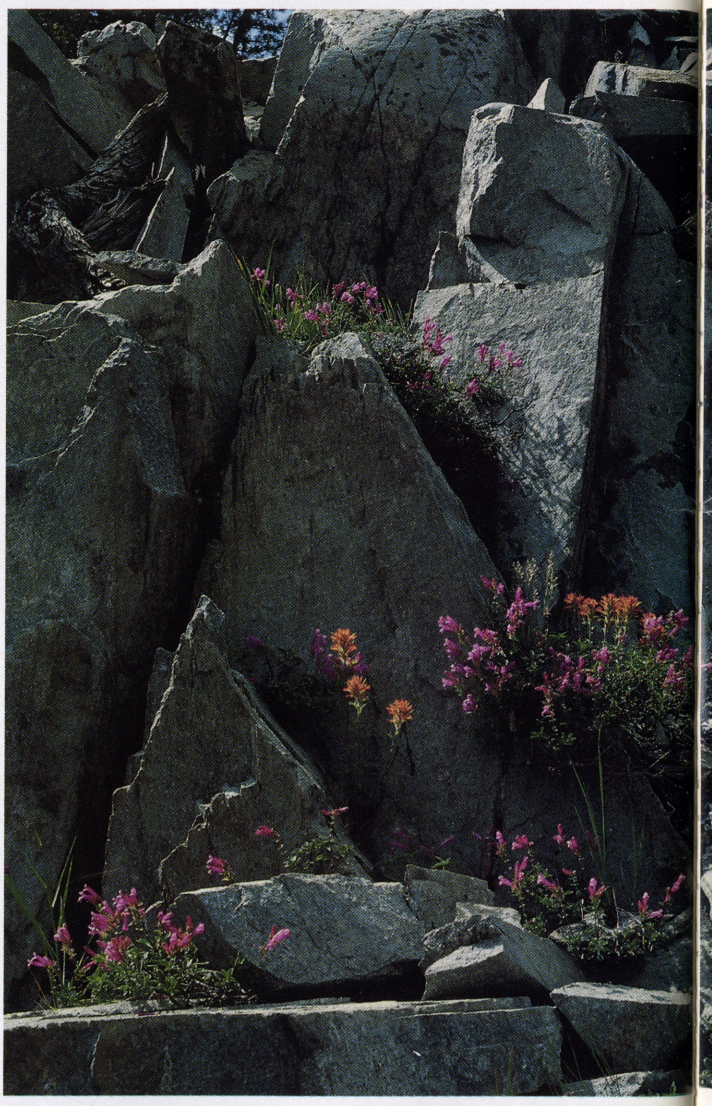
text and photos by Arthur Matula

Summer in the High Sierra is like summer in other climates—wildflowers in profusion paint swaths of color along high country streams. They follow the melting snow, peeking out of windswept granite crevices and filling mountain meadows with brilliant hues.

The wildflowers on these pages—some common and some not so common—are there for you to enjoy. You may have to step off the trail to see them; walk carefully in order to preserve their beauty for those who come after you.

ALPINE LILY

One of a half dozen lily species found in the Sierra, Alpine Lilies (*lilium parvum)* are seldom found near civilization. They prefer out-of-the-way stream beds and moist areas near the timberline. This foursome was blooming along the trail leading into Hoover Wilderness from Virginia Lakes.



LUPINE

Some 12 varieties of lupine, including one yellow variety, grow in the Sierra. They are usually among the first wild flowers to bloom and may occasionally even be seen when October's frosts arrive. A walk on the windswept ridge north of Minaret Overlook during August will reward you with a view of ground-hugging lupine scattered among the twisted evergreens. Pictured at left is the Woodland Lupine (*Lupinus latifolius*).

MONKEY FLOWER

Monkey Flowers (*Mimulus guttatus*), particularly the yellow variety pictured at right, are real western flowers, occuring from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. These were found along a branch of Cottonwood Creek, living as neighbors to fireweed.

COLUMBINE

This Crimson Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*) prefers mountain streams, often taking root on steep banks with its flowers cascading out and over the water's spray.

MOUNTAIN PRIDE

Eleven species of Mountain Pride *(Penstemon newberryii)* grow in the Sierra. These bright rose-purple blooms seem to spring out of crevices in granite. You will find them away from the trail or on rocks lining stream beds.

BLAZING STAR

While most Sierra wildflowers like damp areas, the Blazing Star (*Menzelia laevicaucis*) takes the dry trail. You will find these brilliant flowers on bushy, nondescript plants in dry areas. Morning is the best time to observe the Blazing Star; its blooms are likely to close as the day progresses.

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TRAIL TRASH

by William D. Dooley

According to Dooley's unabashed wilderness dictionary, trail trash is the unsightly discarded refuse normally located near the beginnings and ends of our High Sierra trails. Most hikers want nothing to do with this garbage, carefully stepping over and around it. Some merely avert their eyes and scamper past before anyone observes them in the area. There are, however, a few rare souls who, upon noticing trail trash, stop to examine it more closely.

After reviewing some of my finest work, Sandie Pramann, The Publisher, agreed with me that TRAIL TRASH would be an appropriate title for this column. As a matter of fact, she said that the inclusion of the word trail in the title would be extraneous.

My nickname for Mzzz Pramann is Val, which is short for Valkyre. What else can you call a six-foot blonde with the aggressiveness of Attila the Hun, a trait she chooses to regard as assertiveness?

Anyway, Val and I discussed at length the theme and parameters of this column. She requested that I keep the articles at the lofty journalistic levels that her magazine has allegedly attained. (Don't ask me who's doing the alleging.) My contention was that her splendid rag was losing contact with the great unwashed masses of hikers who inhabit the Sierra. *Sierra Life* carries stories about people who scale mountains using only their little fingers or ski gleefully through the woods carrying a couple of hundred pounds of camping gear that cost slightly more than a B-1 bomber.

What I wanted to do was write a column dedicated to us low-tech campers who have learned to get along with our modest gear and still enjoy the Sierra. I forced her into a verbal corner: I could write what I wanted, and she could publish what she wished. (This is my 57th submission.)

One of the numerous concessions I was forced to make in hammering out my agreement was to stick to the "theme" of each issue. Easy enough, right? This column (Val willing) is supposed to appear in an issue that includes articles about altitude sickness, mosquitos, the Muir Trail and Starr guides. How do I tie all of this into a column about low-tech camping? For instance, when I'm in the woods I move so slowly that I have never experienced altitude sickness. (In fact, until Val explained the nature of altitude sickness, I had thought that it was something unpleasant that happened in the seat of a 747—usually the seat next to mine.) I *do* know for a fact that the Muir Trail is not a trail at all, but a ditch or groove in the ground. It ranges in depth from 10 to 28 inches and is partially filled with round, ankle-twisting rocks and horse manure.

As Val does not seem to possess that sort of information, I'm beginning to suspect that she does not feel the need to actually experience the Sierra firsthand to write about it. Evidently she feels it's only necessary to know enough about the location to miss the higher peaks when traveling from meeting to meeting in the corporate jet.

The very last item we negotiated was the location within the magazine this column would occupy. Naturally I held out for the front page. After a long battle, she gave in. She *did* say something that sounded like "People of your ilk probably read from back to front, anyway." She must have meant "from cover to cover."

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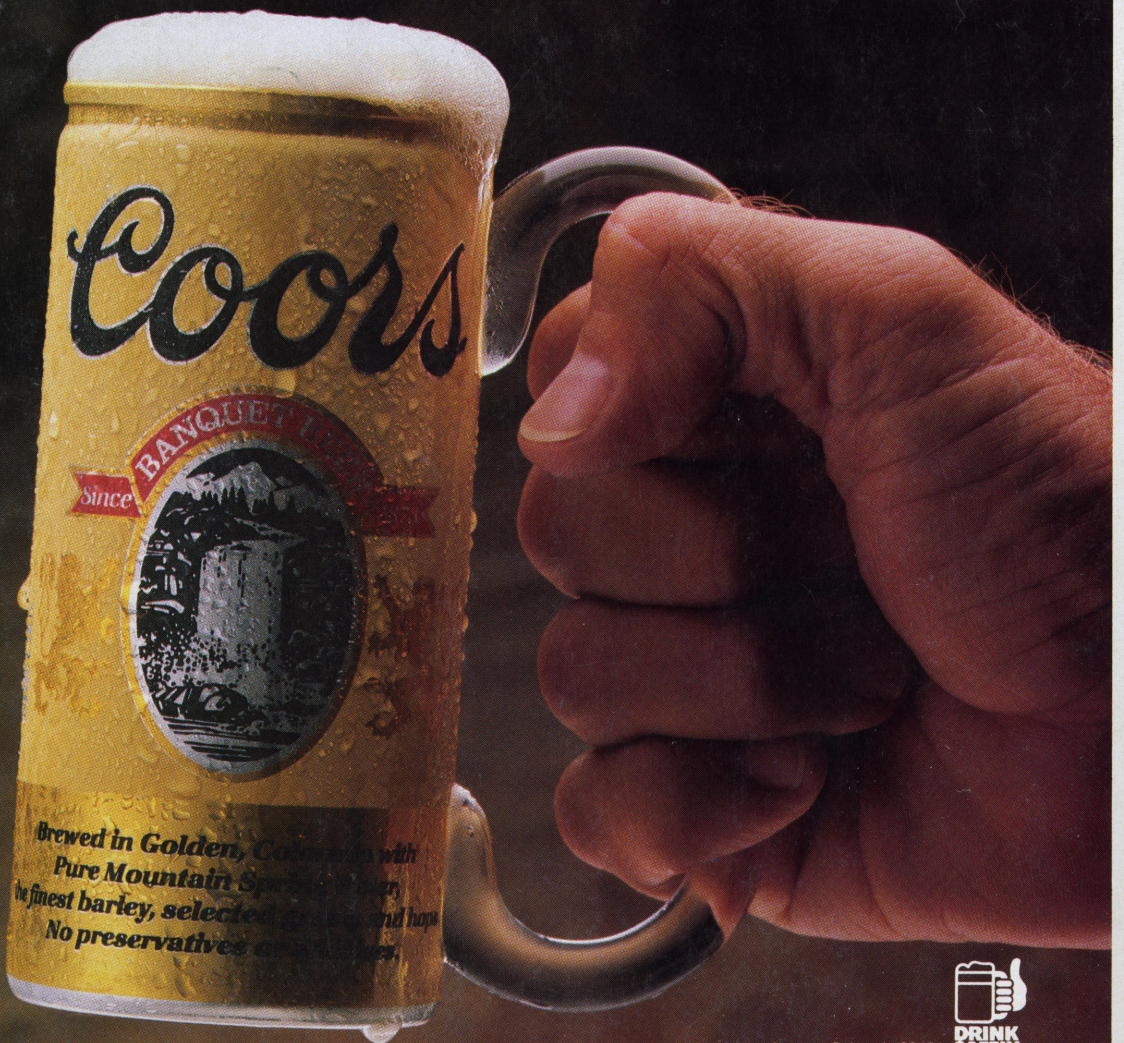

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